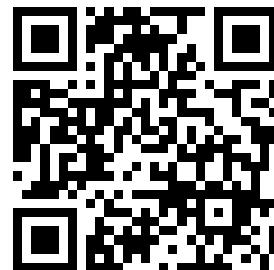

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RESTRICTED

THE SEVENTH
UNITED STATES ARMY
—
REPORT OF OPERATIONS



FRANCE AND GERMANY

3 vols
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REPORT OF OPERATIONS

THE SEVENTH

UNITED STATES ARMY

IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

1944-1945

THREE VOLUMES



RESTRICTED

VOLUME I

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To the Officers and Enlisted Men of the
Seventh United States Army who gave their
lives this history is respectfully dedicated

FOREWORD

Any effort to record a succession of many events, regardless of how closely these events may be related, can result only in a partial and incomplete history. Even though the writer adheres faithfully to the existing documents, contemporary to the events described, and eliminates errors of memory and bias on the part of individuals participating therein, gaps will be bridged. Available documents, such as plans and orders, may have been executed wholly, in part, or not at all. Plans and orders are but a means to the all important end — execution. Under stress of a rapidly moving campaign, continuous and accurate evaluation of situations must be made as they arise, and success hinges on alertness and speed in exploiting an advantage or retrieving a disadvantage. In this control and direction of execution, it is but logical to expect that much of the action is initiated and often changed by decisions and orders transmitted orally on the spur of the moment, and of which no record is practicable.

Throughout its campaign a small group of the Seventh Army Staff worked at scanning source material with the object of producing a continuous narrative. Upon leaving the Mediterranean Theater and coming under the Supreme Allied Headquarters, the narrative history was for some months subordinated to the production of small unit action reports — brief factual reports involving regiments, battalions and companies. While such reports are invaluable for study in the Service Schools, it was realized that they do not afford a substitute for narrative, at Army level, and work on the narrative history was continued.

It is not the object of this history to enhance either the reputation of the Seventh Army or of any individuals in that Army. It is being published to provide a record of the campaigns of that Army, as accurate and unbiased as possible, and not omitting inevitable mistakes and difficulties that may have occurred. Emphasis has been placed on the tactics of the campaign, supply being less thoroughly covered, although there are chapters on supply for each phase of the book. Absence of more detail regarding supply must not be inter-

preted as a lack of appreciation of its importance. Never was a campaign so dependent on supply for success. To say that the functioning of the supply agencies, under supervision of the G-4 Section, was less than brilliant would be an error. The obstacles overcome by them, at times, seemed insurmountable but were never accepted as such.

Since an account of action can be followed accurately only by having both text and maps simultaneously visible to the reader, maps have been arranged so as to provide that convenience.

To fill in some of the gaps in the record and to prevent erroneous conjecture on the part of the reader, the following facts should be remembered:

1. In the landing on the shores of South France tactical surprise was attained as a result of careful planning, including numerous diversionary operations. Therefore the Seventh Army attained the desired goal — a landing with a minimum of opposition.

2. Rapid exploitation to the north from the beachhead was no accident. Based on the mission and experience learned in landings previous to this one, it had been determined during the planning phase that the force would exploit rapidly out of the bridgehead and up the Rhone to contact American forces landed in Normandy just as quickly as opportunity offered.

3. A policy of unrelenting pressure to keep the enemy off balance was maintained throughout the campaign, even during the temporary partial stalemate in the Vosges.

4. In general offensives, the staggering of attack dates for the various components of the Army was done for the purpose of forcing and taking advantage of ill-timed shifting of enemy front line units and reserves.

5. Long range planning in anticipation of possible as well as probable contingencies and developments was the rule.

6. In the final phase beginning 15 March 1945, close liaison between the Seventh Army and the Third Army on its left resulted in harmonious cooperation and teamwork.



ARTHUR A. WHITE
Major General, USA
Chief of Staff, Seventh Army

PREFACE

This document professes to be a narrative military history, something more and something less than the usual report of operations. It is not a compendium of reports submitted by various sections and organizations of Seventh Army. The complete data of an army report, have been forwarded to higher headquarters as annexes and Staff Section Reports. The basis for this history is a selection of material from reports submitted, verified and coordinated with information obtained from other primary sources at both high and low military level.

The original manuscript, from which this document was published, is the After Action Report of the Seventh United States Army in France and Germany which is on file at the War Department. It is fully annotated with complete references to the above mentioned source materials.

It is felt that this history is as accurate as any published within the space of one or two years after the events described. It represents an effort conceived before the beginning of the operation to prepare an historical military narrative. A system of checks and balances was conscientiously employed to find the truth. Close examination of place, time, and logic give the key to many confusing situations. However, when reasonable doubt exists, an attempt is made in this text to indicate the full cycle of reports and to point only to what seems the probable conclusion.

Any text can be authentic only in so far as its sources are authentic and in so far as the persons who compile it do so with integrity. The sources for this history fall generally into two categories: one, reports submitted through the historical section by units within the army and reports of the army staff sections; two, independent research and interview sources. Full credit should be given to unit historians who accumulated the data which form the basis of this account. Their efforts to prepare historical reports of unit engagements, usually in addition to other duties, represent a prodigious achievement.

From these unit reports research writers in the historical section, selected for special abilities in writing or scholarship, prepared their text. They are the men responsible for the accuracy of selecting and recording detail and for whatever interpretation might be necessary. Fortunately the historical section had available for check and balance the work of a group known as

combat historians. These men collected and collated information about significant engagements within a few weeks following the action by means of interview with those who participated in the engagements and by checking terrain and report at first hand. Their reports on small unit actions were valuable in the clarification of engagements, as a check against unit reports. The data of small unit actions have added detail to the narrative and have assisted in the focus of emphasis on the proper places.

The maps and charts in this history are the work of a group of cartographers who collaborated with research and editorial sub-sections in producing a visual record which would supplement and be supplemented by the text. Photographs are for the most part selected from Signal Corps files, although some special work in photography has been done by the historical section. The production group, responsible for turning the manuscript into a book, has supervised publication with a purpose in accord with that of the section: to present a serious, dignified, readable, historical account of Seventh Army operations.

The historical section, during operations, was a detachment of the 6th Information and Historical Service, attached to Seventh Army for the purpose of compiling the historical data for the Army and writing the After Action Report of the operation.

Historians sometimes doubt the validity of history published immediately in the wake of events. It is recognized that five or ten years from now a more dispassionate, more interpretative history may be prepared. However, it is felt that this history has a double value. In the first place it represents the first of secondary sources for the possible history of the future. It is an attempt to give permanence and form to a record which might otherwise be lost or buried. In the second place, this history has now an immediacy which can never be recaptured. It is hoped that this document contains a warmth and fire and a sense of presence too often lacking in history. This can only be accomplished by working in the lights and shadows of the military campaign.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "W. B. Goddard", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W. B. GODDARD
Lt. Col. Infantry
Historian

CHIEF OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION

Lt. Col. William B. Goddard

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T/Sgt. William H. Bancroft
S/Sgt. Robert L. Davis

S/Sgt. Howard S. Dyer

In addition to the above named personnel there were the Combat Historians and other members of the administrative section, officers and enlisted men, who constituted the rest of the Seventh Army detachment of the 6th Information and Historical Service. They, too, made a sizeable contribution to the narrative history. Then there were the photographers of the 163rd Signal Photo Company and the Army Pictorial Division and the officers and enlisted men of the 3060 Engineer Topographic Company who, by their conscientious work and special abilities, added to and aided in the clarification of the finished narrative. And most important of all were the men who carried out the combat operations of Seventh Army, whose actions are herein recorded although too often concealed in anonymity, without whom there would be nothing to write. It is impossible to give proportionate credit to all.

**COMMANDING GENERAL
SEVENTH UNITED STATES ARMY**

CHIEF OF STAFF

AND

GENERAL STAFF OFFICERS



LIEUTENANT GENERAL ALEXANDER M. PATCH
COMMANDING GENERAL, SEVENTH UNITED STATES ARMY



MAJOR GENERAL ARTHUR A. WHITE
CHIEF OF STAFF, SEVENTH UNITED STATES ARMY



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Brigadier General J. F. Brittingham
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Brigadier General Garrison H. Davidson
Engineer Officer



Brigadier General George F. Wooley
Signal Officer

Brigadier General Clyde Massey
Quartermaster Officer





Colonel Myron P. Rudolph
Army Surgeon

Brigadier General Edward W. Smith
Ordnance Officer



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VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

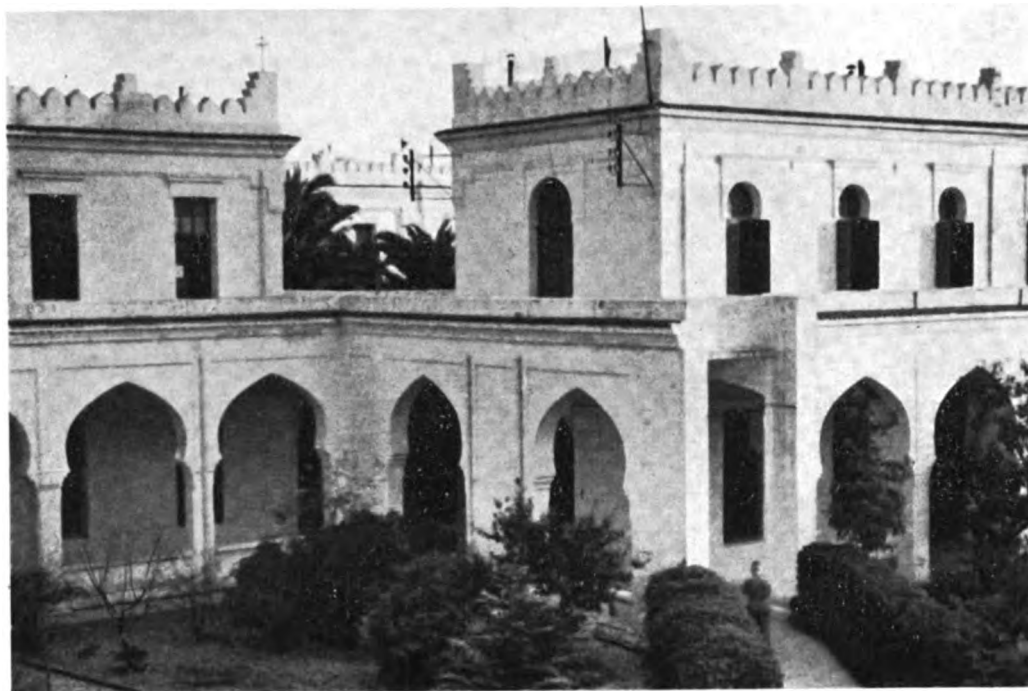
Preliminary Planning

ON 19 December 1943 Seventh Army Headquarters in Palermo received a message which interrupted a four-month period of comparative inactivity since the end of the Sicilian campaign. It was a telegram from Allied Force Headquarters: "An estimate is required as a matter of urgency as to the accommodations which you would require for your planning staffs should you be asked to undertake the planning of an operation of a similar size to *HUSKY* . . ."

Since the capture of Messina on 17 August, which terminated the campaign in Sicily, the Seventh Army had been reduced from a tactical force of six divisions to a headquarters with a skeleton force of only a few remaining service units. In Washington and London the Combined Chiefs of Staff had made plans for an all-out offensive in the Mediterranean Theater to eliminate Italy from the war. As preparations for the invasion of the Italian mainland got under way, the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions, the 82nd Airborne Division, and most of Seventh Army's service units were assigned to the Fifth Army. At the same time the focus of coming events was also centered on the invasion of northern Europe. The 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Armored Division were ordered to the United Kingdom for training as major assault units in the contemplated cross-channel invasion. What remained of the Seventh Army force bivouacked in and about the city of Palermo to continue its training and conditioning, as the headquarters went through a series of command post exercises and completed tactical and historical reports of the summer campaign.

Now an operation similar to *HUSKY*, which had hit the beaches of Sicily, was to be planned. During the last week of December

preparations were made to move and organize the nucleus of a Seventh Army planning staff in the Ecole Normale at Bouzareah, just outside Algiers. Other units remained in Sicily and elaborate precautions were



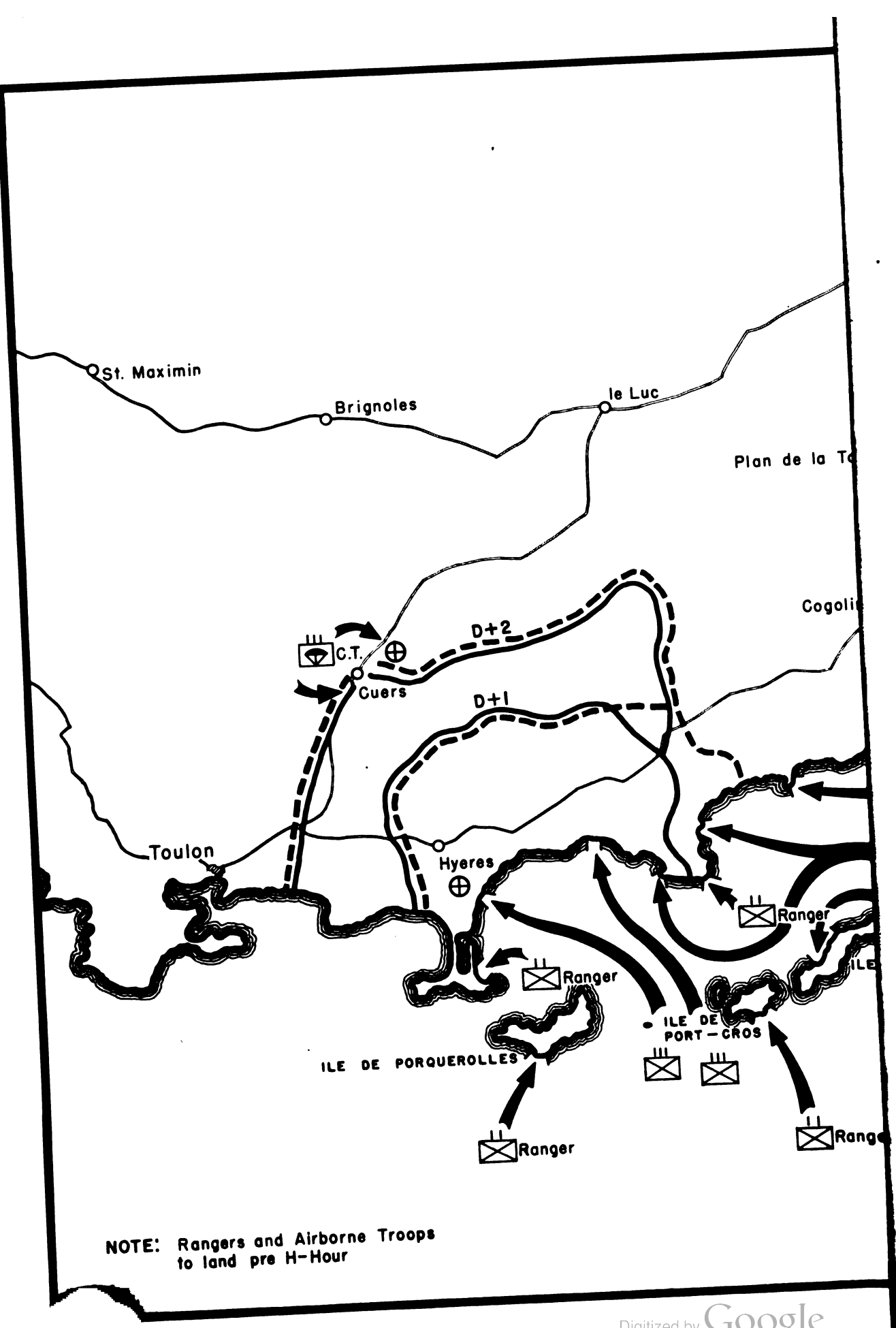
THE ECOLE NORMALE OF BOUZAREAH IN THE CITY OF ALGIERS

"... now an operation similar to HUSKY which had hit the beaches of Sicily was to be planned . . ."

taken to prevent identification of the Bouzareah group with Seventh Army.

Instructions from Allied Force Headquarters to the planning staff on 29 December indicated general direction and objectives. The operation, which was to be known by the code name of *ANVIL*, would be launched with a target date during May 1944 against the south coast of France. In conjunction with the *OVERLORD* invasion of northern Europe, *ANVIL* was to establish a Mediterranean bridgehead and subsequently to exploit towards Lyon and Vichy. The forces involved were to be both American and French, although what the proportion was to be and what the total strength would amount to was as yet uncertain.

6000



NOTE: Rangers and Airborne Troops
to land pre H-Hour

Lieutenant General George S. Patton was relieved from command of the Seventh Army as of 1 January. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, who still retained his Fifth Army command but was also charged with planning Operation *ANVIL*. Some five months were available for plans and revisions and for the organization and training of the striking force against Southern France. For initial consideration there was an Appreciation and Outline Plan previously prepared by Allied Force Headquarters.

AFHQ Appreciation and Outline Plan

In accordance with instructions, the Planning Group under the command of Brigadier General Garrison H. Davidson, Army Engineer, left Sicily and arrived in Algiers on 12 January to begin work. In General Clark's absence the first meeting was presided over by Brigadier General B. F. Caffey, G-3, Special Operations, AFHQ, who informed the group that the headquarters for planning Operation *ANVIL* had been designated as "Force 163". In the afternoon of the same day the various planning sections attended an orientation meeting at Allied Force Headquarters where G-2, G-3, G-4, Transportation and Air Corps discussed appropriate sections of the AFHQ Appreciation and Outline Plan. The discussion was brief and many questions were left unanswered.

The AFHQ Plan envisaged an operation against Southern France, early in May 1944, with a two or three division assault and a build-up to a total of ten divisions for exploitation northward. This, of course, was based on several assumptions: that the Mediterranean Theater would be burdened by no offensive operations other than the Italian campaign; that the internal security of North Africa would not be a limiting factor in the availability of American and French Divisions; that no amphibious operation would or could take place prior to the launching of *OVERLORD*.

The scale of the operation compelled the securing and early use of a major port. Toulon or Sete, to the west of the Gulf of Lions, might be temporarily used but only Marseille could be developed to

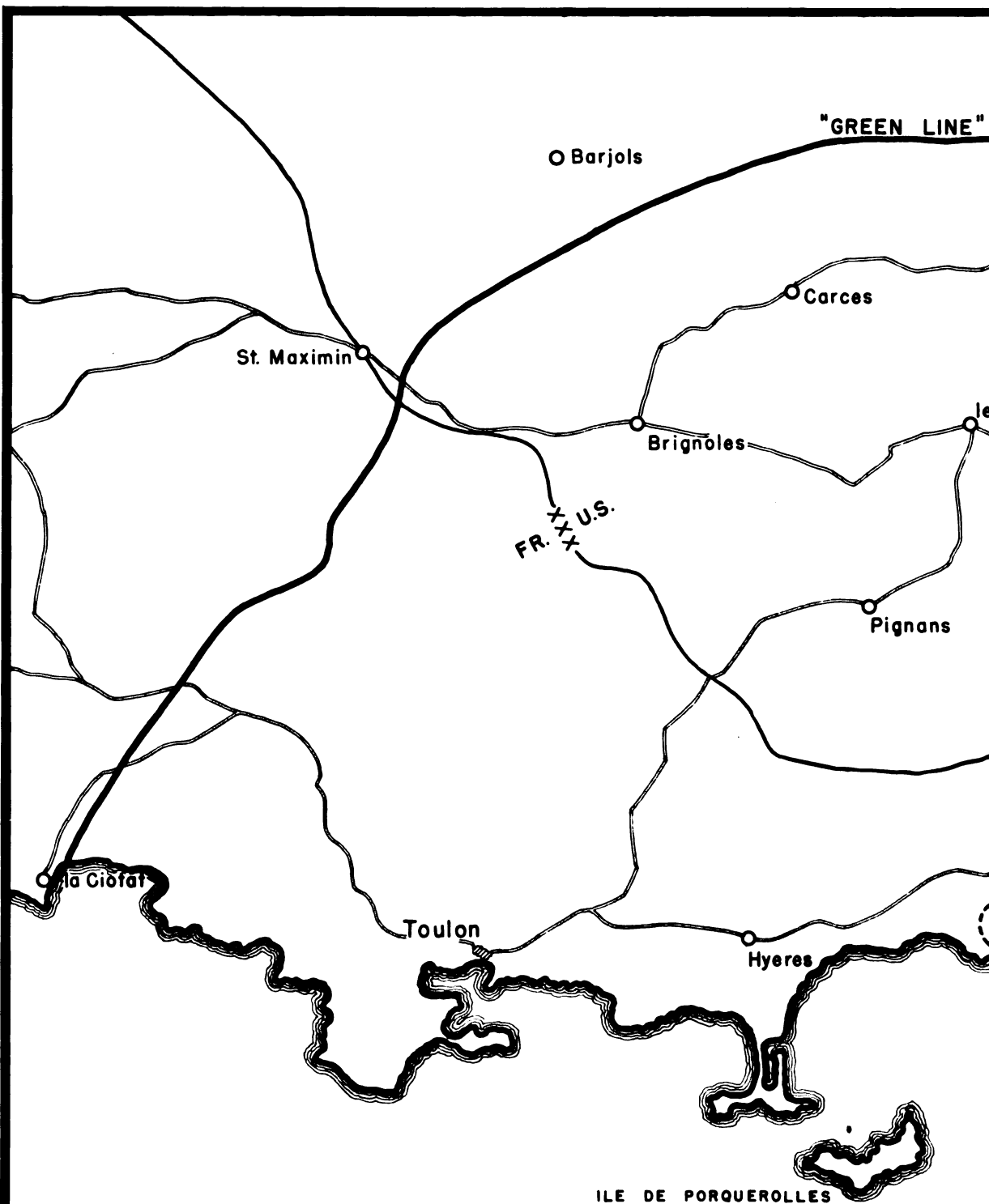
serve as a major supply base. In this same connection, the only beaches considered suitable were those southwest of Sete or those east of Toulon. It was also necessary to secure terrain suitable for the rapid construction of air strips so that fighter cover could be shore-based as soon as possible. The beach area east of Toulon in the vicinity of Rade d'Hyeres and Cavalaire Bay seemed to meet these requirements. It was fairly near Toulon and provided an anchorage for a large number of ships; moreover, the beaches themselves offered satisfactory gradients and good exits.

The assault was conceived with the likely prospect of a two-division lift, or three if available. In either case it was felt that the islands off the coast must be neutralized by Commandos or Rangers prior to H-Hour. The use of airborne troops to help extend the bridge-head and to prevent the rapid movement of enemy reinforcements into the target area was also recommended. Finally, the AFHQ plan suggested that the D-Day assaulting forces should be American with French follow-up troops who would begin landing on D plus 3. The capture of Toulon was to be the first major French objective, followed by the securing of Marseille and a general exploitation to the north.

As a counter proposal the planning staff of Force 163 recommended that the target area be shifted east of Cape Cavalaire in order to avoid an approach between the Islands of Porquerolles, Levant, and Port Cros. The towns of St. Tropez and St. Raphael, between Toulon and Cannes, might also be effectively exploited as small ports, and the terrain west of Frejus was suitable for the rapid construction of air strips. These, clearly, were alternative prospects.

Early Decision Impossible

It was inevitable that from the very beginning planning for *ANVIL* should be handicapped by stipulations, varying assumptions and special conditions. The number of assault divisions available, the build-up force to follow, the influence of the Italian Campaign, and likely objectives in southern France once a successful landing had been made were among the baffling questions yet unanswered. They could be answered only by the course of events elsewhere.



TENTATIVE OUTLINE PLAN ANVIL TWO—DIVISION ASSAULT

NOTE: Plan is essentially the same
as that of 25 January.

During these mid-January meetings in Algiers an amphibious operation known as *SHINGLE* was being mounted on the Italian coast in the Anzio-Nettuno area. The success of the Anzio venture would determine for some time to come the shipping and troops available for future operations. There was as yet no decision by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the scale of *ANVIL*, nor even an approval of the general Outline Plan. Planning, however, went ahead on the basis of a one, two, or three-division assault with a seven-division follow-up. The supply sections began the preparation of logistical requisitions so that the loading of ships in the United States would not be delayed. Initial steps were taken to arrive at a tentative troop list.

Preliminary studies on the beaches, coastal defenses, terrain inland, and the disposition of enemy troops were made by the various sub-sections. In a note, however, which appeared in the Official Diary under 17 January an explanation of the slow, limited progress was offered:

..... At this time the plans for *ANVIL* are not very concrete. There are many questions and weighty decisions that must be made before any staff can logically plan the operation. Information obtained at the Allied Force Headquarters conference is that no word had been received from the combined Chiefs of Staff as to the acceptance of the AFHQ Outline Plan, nor can any decision be made at Allied Force Headquarters as to which plan to accept; that preparations should be made to accept either. Study is still being made at Allied Force Headquarters as to the withdrawal of troops from Italy for training in North Africa. Services of Supply North African Theater of Operations United States Army has already requisitioned some overall maintenance needs. However, phase requisitions and special equipment is a matter of further study.

A radiogram from Allied Force Headquarters dated 23 January instructed the planning staff to go ahead on the assumption that three American divisions would be in the assault. The following day this was changed to a one-division assault. To complicate matters further almost nothing could be done about training since no troop list had been agreed upon. The 85th Division, which had landed at Oran, was tentatively assigned to Force 163 for training. There were indications that the 85th Division would train in North Africa, and that the 3rd and 45th Divisions would be withdrawn from the Fifth Army as soon as they could be spared.

By the end of January, General Patton had left for the United Kingdom and had taken with him several of his key staff officers. There had been no selection of French troops, no withdrawal of divisions from Italy for training, no staging areas assigned, nor any designation of a Base Section Commander. The possibility occurred to those concerned with planning that Operation *ANVIL* had been relegated to a "Command Post Exercise" status. Actually the various sections were groping for something definite on which to plan. This was true not only in Force 163 itself, but also in the Naval and Air Planning Groups.

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, sent the following telegram on 8 February to the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

It is essential to have very early decision regarding *ANVIL*. Preparations for full scale *ANVIL* at or near the original target date has immediate implications on conduct of the present battle for Italy. The whole future strategy in this theater is dependent on whether we are to mount *ANVIL* on a scale of at least a two division assault. I cannot plan the campaign in Italy until I know the decision regarding *ANVIL* and the resources which will be available to me, particularly as regards shipping, assault craft, air forces and troop carrier aircraft.

At the same time General Sir Harold Alexander, British Commander of the Allied Armies in Italy, sent a message to Allied Force Headquarters further amplifying General Wilson's views. It was his opinion that the enemy was preparing to make a stand south of Rome; and, even though there was a successful linkup between the Anzio Beachhead and the main front, all forces in Italy would be needed for an offensive to capture Rome. He strongly opposed the withdrawal of any troops from Italy any time in the near future and pointed out that at the earliest *ANVIL* could not be launched until late July. Furthermore, stated General Alexander, "I do not consider that *ANVIL* with the limited resources likely to be available, would have any effect on drawing enemy forces away from *OVERLORD*." General Alexander felt that until Lyon were threatened the enemy would probably not detach any forces from northern France, and this could not be achieved until Marseille and Toulon were captured.

It was now apparent that the 3rd and 45th Divisions, which were a part of the Anzio Beachhead forces, would not be available for

immediate transfer to Force 163. Two fronts in Italy had to be supplied continuously by water. All service and supply facilities were heavily taxed. What could be available for a third operation elsewhere? The historian of the *ANVIL* summary of events soberly recorded, "The failure of the *SHINGLE* operation to develop as it was expected is having a direct effect It is very difficult to make sound decisions under such uncertain conditions."

On 10 February the Combined Chiefs of Staff announced that D-Day for *OVERLORD* would be postponed about three weeks. The shipping requirements were proving to be enormous, and the Mediterranean Theater was to arrange for the immediate return to the United Kingdom of all LSTs not vitally needed.

Two days later, in a report of progress to Allied Force Headquarters, the *ANVIL* planning staff pointed out that in order to continue their work in an orderly fashion they would need a clear directive from higher headquarters, a definite troop list, and the nomination of ports for mounting. It was apparent to the staff that "The Italian battlefield has to be relegated to holding a defensive line while *ANVIL* is mounted or *ANVIL* can only be mounted in such strength as to be another *SHINGLE*"

AFHQ's reply was that all high-level decisions came from the Combined Chiefs of Staff and until such time as answers were forthcoming planning would have to continue "on the basis of assumptions". It was assumed that there would be a two-division assault, that the two assault divisions would be American and would be mounted in the Naples area; the two follow-up divisions would be mounted from Sicily and North Africa.

As the Italian Campaign developed, higher headquarters became "loathe to risk a change in commanders of the Fifth Army either now or in the near future". The decision was General Wilson's and was concurred in by General Devers. As of 28 February General Clark was relieved of all responsibility connected with *ANVIL*. His "grave burdens" made impossible the close supervision of the *ANVIL* operation which was now becoming necessary.

Pending the assignment of an army commander, General Garrison H. Davidson was requested to continue as the head of the planning group. As a matter of urgency he was asked to designate, at a meeting on 1 March before the assembled planning staff 48 hours hence, the area of southern France in which he believed the assault would be launched. This, of course, was to be in no way binding. The final decision would rest with the Army Commander himself.

General Davidson said that, assuming the target date of *ANVIL* would be on or after that of *OVERLORD*, on the basis of a two-division assault with an eight-division follow-up, and further assuming that sufficient shipping, air and naval support would be available, it was his opinion that the most favorable area for an assault in southern France was east of Toulon between Cape Cavalaire (Beach 259) and Agay (Beach 265). An assault in this area would provide the best opportunity for insuring a successful landing and adequate beaches over which to land supplies and follow-up forces, with nearby terrain suitable for the rapid construction of air strips.

General Patch Assumes Command

On 2 March Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch (then Major General) was appointed commander of the ground forces taking part in Operation *ANVIL*. A newcomer to the European-African Theater of Operations, General Patch was well-known for his Guadalcanal campaign in the Pacific and more recently had commanded IV Corps on training duties in the Western United States.

The change of command was smoothly accomplished. Vacancies in Force 163 Staff which had been created when General Patton went to England were filled by staff officers from General Patch's previous command, IV Corps, just arriving in North Africa. Key officers from IV Corps included Major General Arthur A. White, Chief of Staff; Colonel W. H. Craig, A. C. of S., G-1; Colonel W. W. Quinn, A. C. of S., G-2, and Brigadier General John S. Guthrie, A. C. of S., G-3. A veteran Seventh Army Officer, Colonel O. C. Harvey, continued as A. C. of S., G-4. The post of Civil Affairs Officer (later G-5) went to Colonel Harvey S. Gerry, who joined Force 163 in April.



LT. GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON WITH LT. GEN. ALEXANDER M. PATCH
". . . *The Seventh Army was to take the offensive again under a new commander . . .*"

After Colonel Leo V. Warner joined the headquarters in July, 1944, as Deputy Chief of Staff, all General Staff positions remained unchanged throughout the Seventh Army's campaign into France and Germany except that of A. C. of S., G-5. Colonel Gerry was called to higher headquarters in October and was replaced by Colonel John J. Albright. Shortly thereafter Colonel Albright went to the 36th Infantry Division and on 4 December 1944, Colonel Joseph L. Canby became A. C. of S., G-5. Colonel Canby held the post during the remainder of the operation and well into the occupational period.

Two days after his appointment, General Patch was briefed on all planning which had been accomplished to date. He was able to inform his staff, as a result of conferences with high military sources while en-route to his new assignment, that in principle *ANVIL* had definitely been approved by the War Department and would enjoy a second priority in the world-wide operations of United States forces. He urged each officer to exert his best efforts for a successful completion of this major mission.

Basically, the Appreciation and Outline furnished Force 163 by AFHQ remained the governing plan. It was still envisaged, at the time General Patch assumed command, that *ANVIL* forces would invade southern France in conjunction with *OVERLORD*, establish a bridgehead, and subsequently exploit toward Lyon and Vichy. The target date was early June, although nominations of American and French components in the operation were yet undecided and would continue to depend on the progress of the battle in Italy. More imminent was the fact that an Outline Plan, coordinated with Naval and Air Task Force commanders, was to be submitted for AFHQ approval by 15 April.

Target Date Changes

Through the months to come, the original recommendations for the assault area as formulated under General Davidson were to remain intact. During March, conferences were held with the Air Corps and the Navy to discuss such matters as the employment of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, pre-D-Day bombing, the organization of the

Beach Control Board, and the work of the Beach Obstacle Board. A recommendation was made to AFHQ that provision be made for eighteen Naval Shore Fire Control parties, composed of Army and Navy personnel, to be included in Operation *ANVIL*.

In order to coordinate details, the Force 163 Headquarters from the very beginning included small Naval and Air planning staffs. Captain R. A. J. English, U. S. Navy, headed the Naval Group and Group Captain R. B. Lees, Royal Australian Air Force the planners from Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force. There were a number of British officers attached to the headquarters, both technical experts and observers. As the French came into the *ANVIL* picture, French officers reported for duty and were integrated in appropriate staff sections. The rambling white Ecole Normale in Bouzareah, high above Algiers, began to throb with its top secret activity. Many visitors drove past the rusty barbed wire and came through the tight Military Police guard.

In view of the fact that the target date for *ANVIL* was still tentatively scheduled for about 1 June, General Patch considered requesting firm decision from higher headquarters in order that Corps and Division detailed planning might begin immediately. It was essential that American assault divisions be designated immediately, that the Corps Commander and the Corps Staff be selected, and that French units be nominated. This request, however, was delayed for several days, since a major decision was expected momentarily.

On 12 April word arrived from General Wilson that the Supreme Allied Commander had decided that *ANVIL* could not now be launched before late July. The directive asking for coordinated plans to be submitted to Allied Force Headquarters by 15 April was now rescinded. Factors causing the postponement included the planning of an all out offensive in Italy, to begin about 10 May, and the withdrawal of landing craft from the Mediterranean for *OVERLORD*.

In accordance with AFHQ instructions the combined Ground, Naval, and Air Outline Plans for Operation *ANVIL* were presented on 29 April to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater,

who arrived in Algiers accompanied by a group of senior officers including General Devers, Commanding General of NATOUSA, representatives of the Air Corps, the Navy, and the French. For some two hours in the War Room of Force 163 major outline plans were discussed. General Patch made some introductory statements; G-2 gave a brief but comprehensive estimate of the terrain, enemy capabilities, defense plans, and battle order.

The Army Outline Plan presented at this time was virtually the same as the one previously submitted for staff consideration a month before on 29 March. It called for a parachute force of at least three battalions to support the initial two-division assault. Commandos and Rangers were assigned certain special missions to neutralize the islands off the coast, block roads, and protect the assault flanks. The follow-up totaled eight divisions. The proposed target area was east of Toulon between Cape Cavalaire and the Bay of Agay. The Air Corps was to give close tactical support on D-Day and also to engage in an extensive program of pre-D-Day bombing from Spain to the Italian border. The Navy was charged with convoying, landing and supplying the assaulting forces, and cooperating with the Air Forces in reducing enemy beach defenses on D-Day.

On 5 May it was learned from the War Office in London through AFHQ that definite answers regarding questions on overall planning in the Mediterranean Theater could not be given immediately. During the same week AFHQ also announced that a new directive would shortly be issued relative to plans for a modified *ANVIL*. General Patch informed his staff that they might expect to plan several operations concurrently, any one of which might be put into action depending upon the situation.

Modifications

The target date of *ANVIL* had now been postponed until late July. Nevertheless General Patch left for the United Kingdom in order to coordinate his plans with those for *OVERLORD*. On 13 May AFHQ

issued a formal directive asking for the preparation of three separate plans which were to be coordinated with conditions known as *RANKIN A*, *B*, and *C*:

PLAN A (Conditioned by partial German withdrawal): A two-division assault in the area east of Toulon with a target date early in August and having for its objective the capture of Toulon and Marseille and thence an exploitation northward toward Lyon and Vichy. The assumption was that the enemy would offer resistance on the beaches but would withdraw the greater part of his forces from the immediate coastal area and fight heavy delaying actions in the lower Rhone Valley.

However, should the situation require it, a supplementary landing might have to be made over toward the Spanish border in the Sete area, followed by a rapid advance along the north shore of the Gulf of Lions. This plan was to be completed and ready for presentation not later than 10 June.

PLAN B (Conditioned by complete evacuation of southern France): Assuming that the enemy was planning to evacuate all of southern France with the possible exception of a few of his satellite troops whose morale was too low for effective future employment, the object of the landing would be to harass the enemy and create confusion in his rear. If such a situation arose, the French Forces of the Interior would be called on to play a major part in carrying out sabotage and engaging in guerilla warfare to prevent German withdrawal. They were also to aid the military authority in restoring order, setting up local administration, and initiating urgent relief measures.

The strength of the assault was to be the same as in *PLAN A*, but the landing was to be in the vicinity of Sete with an advance through the Carcassonne Gap on Bordeaux. The draft was to be completed and ready for presentation not later than 1 July.

PLAN C (Conditioned by unconditional surrender and cessation of all organized resistance): If by chance the landing east of Marseille and Toulon should be unopposed, followed by a complete collapse of all enemy resistance in southern France due to a low state of morale and the breakdown of supply services, the Commanding General of the Seventh Army would be responsible for enforcing the armistice terms and restoring civil authority. It was expected that certain German troops would undoubtedly try to escape to the Rhine by any possible means, and the object of *PLAN C* was to disarm and administer enemy formations or individuals and prevent their movement or escape.

Now, in addition to the original outline plan for *ANVIL* there were three substitute plans to give maximum flexibility. On 24 May

Plan A was presented to interested Staff Sections. The Engineers, the Navy, and the Air Corps presented their respective aspects of the problem and discussed the most desirable time of action. G-3 proposed a scheme of maneuver for the initial assault to be modified after the capture of Toulon to provide for a change in mission. A land advance toward the Carcassonne Gap and another amphibious landing in the Sete area were among the possibilities considered.

A cable from the British Chiefs of Staff, dated 29 May, agreed that *ANVIL* should be given priority over all operations in the theater outside Italy and so recommended the operation to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Commanding General of NATOUSA now began again to requisition supplies on the greatest possible scale that shipping would permit, but warned the War Department that unless critical materials could be secured and shipped, the target date for late July or early August could not be met.

French Participation

One of the first indications that French military forces would participate in operation *ANVIL* was given in a G-3 memorandum 11 February 1944 from AFHQ in which "language difficulties" were discussed. Apparently an American-French staff along the lines of the American-British staff was completely impractical. A liaison section of specially selected staff officers was to be established to convey the orders of the American commander to the French formations taking part in the invasion. If political considerations made it necessary, there might be a French Deputy Commander with a small personal staff.

Clearly the French were to be brought into the *ANVIL* picture. Their role and contribution had to be calculated in the planning and in the preparations for the mounting of the operation. As a result of General Davidson's suggestion that the French High Command appoint a small headquarters or contact group capable of making decisions with respect to French subordinate units, a small planning group, headed by Colonel Jean L. Petit, was stationed at headquarters of Force 163. Colonel Petit worked closely with the American Chief of Staff, General White, and French officers were attached to staff sections.

5-10-44

From the very beginning the French were singleminded in their arguments in behalf of *ANVIL*. "It is inadmissable," General Charles De Gaulle contended, "for French troops at this stage of the war to be used elsewhere than in France." At times, as a matter of "prestige", the French sought, as representation for their forces, an Army under their own command. They even went so far as to suggest that all Allied forces taking part in the southern invasion might constitute a single army under French command.

To the French it was of vital importance that in a campaign for France's liberation their own forces should be under French command. They agreed, however, that though it meant placing a full French general under an American general of lower rank they would be willing for the Americans to handle all administration, supply, and the over-all



GEN. CHARLES DE GAULLE, GEN. DE LATTRE (left), AND
FRENCH STAFF

"... the fundamental contention as a matter of national pride and honor was for a French army under a French general on French soil ..."

tactical planning. During the uncertain periods they were "seriously perturbed" to hear that alternatives to *ANVIL* were being considered. The fundamental contention as a matter of national pride and honor was for a French army under a French general on French soil.

On 15 March General De Gaulle visited General Wilson at his headquarters in Italy to declare his full cooperation in the coming battle of France. Three important elements were involved: the regular army, the resistance groups, and the administration of French territory as soon as it was freed from the enemy. General Wilson expressed satisfaction with these offers but pointed out that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had given priority to the battle of Italy. Rome would have to be taken before the battle of France could begin. The fact that it would be difficult to use French troops during the assault phase of the landing in southern France was also pointed out; but General Wilson indicated that after a beachhead had been secured, there was no reason why French troops could not be landed to participate in the ensuing battles. General De Gaulle stated that he realized this point of view to be correct and was in thorough accord.

One month later on 15 April General N. E. Bethouart, Chief of Staff of French National Defense, called on General Wilson in Algiers to say that General De Gaulle had named General de Lattre de Tassigny to command French forces in operation *ANVIL*. General Wilson stated that he was glad to hear that a choice had been made. He intimated, however, that it would be difficult to fit a French army commander in the scheme of things at this particular time because there were already too many staffs involved in planning. General Bethouart was informed that the matter would be discussed with the Commanding General of Force 163 and a decision rendered at a later date.

Shortly after this meeting, a question arose regarding French chain of command and channels of communication with Corsica. All French forces in the Mediterranean Theater, with the exception of Italy, had been placed under the command of General de Lattre; and General De Gaulle held that the normal channel of communication between AFHQ and French units in Corsica should be through the French Commander-in-Chief only. Applying, as it did, merely to the defense of

the Island of Corsica, and not to Allied operations which happened to be mounted from there, this contention was readily agreed to by AFHQ.

For the present the question was settled. It is, however, significant to note that the problem of the French chain of command continued to come up throughout the planning phase. This involved, in the opinion of the French, military and political prestige of the highest order, and therefore could not be dismissed lightly by those charged with planning *ANVIL*.

The French Army itself now proposed a plan for the invasion of southern France. During the first week of May General de Lattre called on General Patch at headquarters of Force 163 near Algiers and presented his proposal before an assembly of officers in the War Room. The French general emphasized the importance of carrying out *ANVIL* since it would be an opportunity for the French forces themselves to make a contribution to the liberation of their country. Only a few French troops, the staff was reminded, were to be used in *OVERLORD*. The plan outlined by General de Lattre differed in several respects from the original conception of *ANVIL*, and it was turned over to G-3 for further study and comment. ✓

The French plan assumed that there would be available sufficient lift for an assault by three infantry divisions and two armored combat commands with a follow-up by D plus 3 of two infantry divisions. This of course, far exceeded the scale of present *ANVIL* plans of a two-division assault with a follow-up of one infantry division and one armored combat command. The French proposal for a landing both to the east and to the west of Toulon involved a division of forces which would, as General Patch pointed out in a letter to General de Lattre, reduce in proportion air cover, naval fire support, and the capacity of beach groups to unload supplies and consolidate their dumps. Also, to the west of Toulon was located the heaviest concentration of enemy coastal batteries and beach defenses which would undoubtedly increase the difficulties of the assault force. Finally, even though Toulon was attacked from only one side, probably making impossible an early capture of the city, the advantages of a less extended beachhead and more favorable terrain would out-weigh other considerations.

A satisfactory arrangement was finally worked out to bring the French Army Headquarters into the *ANVIL* picture. It was proposed that during the initial phase of the operation General de Lattre would land as Commanding General of the first French Corps ashore, with the Corps commander as his deputy. The staff would consist of officers from the Army Headquarters as well as from the Corps Headquarters. When the second French Corps arrived, the Commanding General of Army B, using his Army Staff, would assume command of both corps, thus establishing his Army Headquarters. General De Gaulle, President of the French Committee of National Liberation and Chief of the Armed Forces, gave his approval.

Meanwhile, at Force 163 Headquarters in Bouzareah, American and French staff officers went steadily forward with their plans for equipping, training and supplying the French troops for *ANVIL*.

Troops and Supplies

The misfortune of Operation *ANVIL*, in its first planning period, was simply that its hopes and prospects fell in the long shadows cast by the bitter Italian campaign on the one side and the anxious preparations for *OVERLORD* in Normandy on the other. It was hardly unexpected that all first priorities for either troops or supplies went elsewhere. Logistics were consequently confined to hypothetical propositions which had to be constantly revised. There was the reluctance to withdraw any of General Alexander's divisions from Italy until after the breakthrough and capture of Rome. Nor could troops be diverted from any other theater.

Shortly after Force 163 set up its headquarters in Algiers, a rear echelon charged with supply planning was established in Oran. Services of Supply, NATOUSA, began pressing for requisitions for an operation which had not yet been approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in order that there would be no delay when authorization was received. As early as 21 January there was a request from Oran for loading plans, phased requisitions for vehicles, and mounting ports and staging areas. But inasmuch as no troop list had been established, and

none of these issues had yet been decided, only general replacement items could be ordered from the United States.

In the beginning the assumption was that two or three American divisions would be in the assault, and it was presumed that they would come from Italy. In view of current operations on the Italian peninsula it seemed doubtful that any large number of troops could be trained and mounted from the Naples area without tying up ports and transportation facilities. On 26 January word was received that units tentatively assigned to *ANVIL* would train as follows; the 85th Division in North Africa and the 3rd and 45th Divisions in Italy or Sicily. The latter two divisions would begin moving out to begin training about 3 February. Events later proved this was not possible.

At the end of the first week in February there was still no definite troop assignment, no mounting nor staging areas; and though the supply section of Force 163 was functioning, it had nothing definite on which to base its requisitions. At this date no French units had been assigned, but the Liaison Section did estimate the French were about 70,000 troops short of the requirements originally set for them.

The problem of U. S. replacements was similarly unclarified and unsolved. General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, NA-TOUSA and the Deputy Theater Commander, pointed out on 18 February that replacements allocated to the Mediterranean Theater under the present shipping schedule were hardly adequate to sustain operations in Italy. Furthermore, he maintained, any ground force replacements expected to arrive in the near future could not be diverted to any *ANVIL* units.

So it was that the combined Chiefs of Staff made their decision: *ANVIL* could not be launched before D-Day of *OVERLORD*. The forces involved, as now known, would be one American Corps of three divisions and two French Corps totaling five infantry divisions and two armored divisions. For purposes of planning, the total shipping which could be made available for the operation consisted of 100 ships for pre-loading, 105 ships during the first thirty days, 120 ships during the second thirty days, and 53 ships during the third thirty days. The

general rate of buildup was assumed to be on the basis of a two-division assault which might be modified.

A request that certain airborne and ranger type troops be made available to Force 163 for immediate training received the same response from AFHQ as had requests for combat divisions. It was stated that until the tactical situation in Italy had been clarified no commitments could be made. Specialized service troops, such as intelligence and translating personnel, were also difficult to obtain.

The essential *ANVIL* supply problem in the large issues of the invasion appeared to be that of smooth flow from the ships off-shore to the beach dumps, and behind that a smooth transition in the control of supplies from the Base Section to the Beach Groups. It was not considered possible to have a port available before D plus 25. In the first period, then, all supplies would come from beach dumps.

A Beach Control Planning Board was established on 21 March. All beach and engineer units were to be organized and trained directly under the control of Force 163, and not under the Base Section. Problems of organization, administration, and training were worked out with newly-designated Base Section representatives on the Control Group Planning Staff; a standard operating procedure for unloading supply ships, traffic control, maintenance of dumps, division of Army and sub-task force control, and the close coordination of all supply agencies.

Such training preparations as could be made in this early period remained as nebulous as the other aspects of *ANVIL* planning. The Amphibious Training Center, Brigadier General Henry C. Wolfe announced, was to be moved from Port Aux Poules, Algeria, to Italy. But no American troops had yet been designated for training. In fact, one regiment of the 85th Division had been relieved from Force 163 and assigned to Fifth Army. It was still impossible to state any definite date when the Ranger Force, Special Service Force, or the 509th Parachute Battalion would be available for training. When the rest of the 85th Division was ordered to proceed from North Africa to Italy to join the Fifth Army, any commitment of troops for *ANVIL* was now clearly and definitely postponed.

French units were designated on 7 April. Information was received from AFHQ that the 1st Motorized Infantry Division, 2nd Armored Division, and 9th Colonial Infantry Division had been committed to *ANVIL*, and were to be completely equipped in accordance with the policy of employing French units in combat operations as components of an American force. The 1st Armored Division and the 5th Armored Division were to be considered as "non-participating units".

By 15 April supplies requisitioned in January and early February began to arrive in the theater. Almost simultaneously SOS NATOUSA received word that the New York Port of Embarkation had cancelled all maintenance requisitions. Their instructions were that *ANVIL* was being discontinued. The Commanding General, NATOUSA now requested the War Department for a definite statement as to "whether cancellation of *ANVIL* including complete stoppage of supply action has occurred". According to the "present instructions" of SOS, "plans for *ANVIL* must continue"; and the cancellations were causing concern.

Even if an amphibious operation on the *ANVIL* scale were not to be launched until July or August, the logistics of the operation nevertheless demanded 100 cargo ships pre-loaded in mid-July and a 32,000 lift in personnel shipping. For subsequent follow-up convoys sufficient cargo shipping would have to be made available to allow 150 sailings in each of the first and second 30-day periods with 50 sailings in the third 30-day period. A personnel lift for 16,000 would also be needed in the follow-up convoys.

SOS NATOUSA had no alternative but to freeze the classes of supplies requisitioned originally for *ANVIL*. Now frozen were all Quartermaster, Engineer, Transportation, Ordnance, Medical, Signal, and Chemical Warfare items with the exception of high explosive and white phosphorous chemical mortar shells. Supplies now in the theater would be considered part of regular theater stocks and marked off against future requisitions. Shortly thereafter a message returned from the War Department to the effect that no cut in procurement was contemplated.

It was clear some sort of major amphibious operation was being planned for the near future. Major General Thomas P. Larkin, the Commanding General of SOS NATOUSA asked for "clarification" from Operations and Plans Division, War Department in Washington and demanded that full and adequate supply planning information be given him in order to keep to a minimum last-minute requisitions of critical items. "As the situation now stands," General Patch pointed out on 31 May, supplies necessary for *ANVIL* "will not be available when required."

By June no nomination of American divisions had been definitely made. It was thought that probably the 45th, the 3rd, and the 36th or 85th Divisions would shortly be released from Italy in order to begin amphibious training. Plans were underway to move the 40th Engineer Regiment with its beach elements from North Africa to Italy in order to train with the 45th Division. The 540th Engineers were to train with the 3rd Division and the 36th Engineers with the remaining division. Likewise in the selection of service and technical maintenance troops it was desired to retain the units which had been working with combat divisions in the field in order to preserve as much as possible the element of team work.

On 11 May the all-out offensive of the Fifth and Eighth Armies got under way in Italy. The link-up of the Anzio Beachhead with the main front was followed by the capture of Rome. The release of troops from Italy for *ANVIL* had been dependent on a turn of events in the Italian campaign. On 4 June the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean agreed that three American divisions and one French Division could be released at an early date.

A firm decision, according to General Wilson, had been reached to mount an amphibious operation on the *ANVIL* scale. Headquarters of the Allied Armies in Italy was notified on 15 June to release the Headquarters of the U. S. VI Corps "at once", the 45th, 3rd, and 36th Divisions, two French Divisions and certain auxiliary combat troops, such as tank-destroyer battalions, tank battalions, and anti-aircraft units. These units were to be assigned to Force 163 for administration, planning, and training; and to SOS NATOUSA for supply.

Thus far no Base Section Commander had been nominated, although repeated requests had been made to NATOUSA for such an appointment. Finally on 26 June authority was received to activate the Coastal (later Continental) Base Section and Major General A. R. Wilson was nominated as commander. However, it was approximately a month later before General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson authorized Base Section Personnel to be put on detached service with Force 163. Throughout all supply planning, one of the fundamental conceptions was that key personnel of the Base Section should have an intimate knowledge of the Supply problem in order that they might assume full responsibility at the earliest possible date.

Decision for ANVIL

Even after assignment of troops to Force 163, it was by no means certain that *ANVIL* would go forward as planned. The possible courses of action included an amphibious operation at the head of the Adriatic as well as an assault against the south of France. In their message to General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and Eisenhower, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had simply stated that "... preparations for an amphibious operation should go forward on the greatest scale for which resources can be made available and at the earliest date".

An alternative to *ANVIL* in the form of a drive toward the Balkans had been mentioned as early as March 1944 when the Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean Theater proposed a cover plan in connection with *ANVIL*. General Wilson at this time explained the need for concealing preparations for a drive against Southern France in order to prevent the enemy from sending in reinforcements prior to the assault.

By 21 May we shall know whether we are going to launch *ANVIL* or not. If we are, then *ANVIL* itself is the method by which we hope to contain German forces in southern France. The preparations for the real thing will no doubt be pretty obvious, but there should be no question of increasing the difficulties of a naturally difficult

operation by having it both ways, that is, trying to contain enemy forces by the cover plan as well as the real thing.

The answer is therefore that whether or not it is ultimately decided to launch *ANVIL* our cover plan should aim at disguising our intentions to attack the south of France and to build up a threat to the Balkans. If *ANVIL* is decided on, these plans should hold to the last moment, at which time the *ANVIL* preparations should be explained away by a threat to northwest Italy. If on the other hand, it is decided not to launch *ANVIL* we shall at some date after 21 May have to mount some sort of threat or feint which will be obvious to the enemy. It is important to do nothing until the latest possible date that will attract enemy forces into France.

As the Italian situation opened up, there was quite a natural desire on the part of those in command there to keep sufficient troops to press the advantage. Shortly after the fall of Rome on 4 June, General Alexander, commanding Allied Forces in Italy, prepared a new review and appreciation of the tactical situation. General Alexander expressed himself as so convinced that a continued offensive in Italy would force the enemy to draw to a maximum on his reserves. His plans for the destruction of the German Army in Italy, practicable only "... if the forces and administrative resources now at my disposal remain intact ...", would, he believed, render the greatest assistance to the Normandy Invasion. Once the Pisa-Rimini line was secured, he felt that the Allies should continue the pursuit northeast through the Ljubljana Gap toward southern Hungary.

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, in his turn, now felt that *ANVIL* could not be launched in time to be of use to *OVERLORD* and therefore could be eliminated. As an alternative to *ANVIL*, he recommended an advance to the Ljubljana Gap with an amphibious operation against Trieste at a later date.

Strongly disagreeing with this line of reasoning, General Eisenhower maintained that the advance on Ljubljana and Trieste suggested by General Wilson was no guarantee that an appreciable number of German divisions would be diverted from France. Such an operation, the Supreme Commander felt, would neither give an additional port which would be of direct assistance to *OVERLORD* nor would it render any positive effect until 1945.

"I therefore recommend *ANVIL*," General Eisenhower told the Combined Chiefs of Staff. "General Wilson is fully prepared to carry out *ANVIL* if the decision is made to do so. This opens up another gateway into France, which, if not the best geographical location, is the best we can hope to obtain at an early date. The possession of such a gateway I consider vital."

"In my view," General Eisenhower argued, "the resources of Great Britain and the United States will not permit us to maintain two major theaters in the European War, each with decisive missions."

General Eisenhower accordingly recommended that *ANVIL* be launched not later than 30 August and preferably by 15 August with sufficient strength to give it reasonable chances of success. In event of a negative decision, he asked that all French divisions, plus one or two



GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

"... Southern France would be invaded. Force 163 would at last have plans, supplies, a definite assault date ..."

American divisions previously allocated to *ANVIL*, be made available for *OVERLORD* as soon as shipping could be secured.

It was soon apparent that the combined Chiefs of Staff had taken the view that France would be the decisive Theater of operations during 1944. At a London conference attended by representatives from Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and Allied Force Headquarters, concluded about 23 June, *ANVIL* received the final go-ahead signal. Southern France would be invaded.

CHAPTER II

The Target Area and German Defense Plans

RELATIVELY free from the uncertainties which harassed some Force 163 planners during the early stages, the G-2 Section and its allied agencies progressed steadily in the task of gathering intelligence about the *ANVIL* target area. Detailed information of the Riviera Coast came in from varied sources — from air photographs, from agents, from Frenchmen who had known the area in happier days, and from Baedeker's Guide.

Algiers was then the heart of Free France, the true seat of the *Comite de la Liberation*, and it would be naive to state that efforts to conceal the activity at Bouzareah were entirely successful. An operation against Southern France was an obvious step, and one which would occur instinctively to every patriotic French exile. However G-2 took what security measures were possible. Persons intimate with planning were kept to the bare minimum, and the sponge-rubber relief maps in the War Room were zealously guarded. Force 163 personnel who met friends in downtown Algiers explained vaguely that they were "with AFHQ". No reference was made to Seventh Army.

Before going further — to allow fuller appreciation of the task confronting the planners for *ANVIL* — it is perhaps appropriate to describe in some detail the topography of the target area and at the same time to set down a brief resume of what G-2 was able to learn about enemy strength, capabilities and defenses in that area prior to D-day.

Topography of the Target Area

The Mediterranean coast of France consists of three main mountain masses separated by two corridors. Along the Spanish border lie the Pyrenees, to the north of which is the Carcassonne Gap, formed by the valleys of the Garonne and Aude Rivers. Northeast of the Pyrenees is the Massif Central, which presents its steepest face to the Mediterranean. Farther east, toward the Italian-Swiss border, is the great mass of the Alps-Jura system. The latter two mountain masses are separated by the valley of the Rhone River, which is the great natural corridor from the Mediterranean coast to the Paris basin. The Rhone flows through a series of narrow valleys and broad basins, which are frequently openings into important corridors to the east. There is, for example, the valley of the Isere, leading to Grenoble, and the valley of the Durance, which separates the Provence Alps from the Dauphine Alps.

Below Avignon, the Rhone Valley widens into a broad delta which merges with the lowlands of the Carcassonne Gap to form a long stretch of marshy coast extending from the base of the Pyrenees to Marseille. The beaches in this area are suitable for large scale landings, but the delta is not a good entrance to the Rhone corridor because of the many water courses which intersect it. The general bogginess of the terrain is such as to create difficulties for both tracked and wheeled vehicles deploying off the roads. East of Marseille the coast is rugged and irregular where the mountain masses reach to the sea, leaving only narrow sand beaches and small deltaic plains. Passage into the interior is possible only through a few narrow river valleys, such as the Argens, which leads into the Durance corridor and is the best approach to the Rhone Valley from the south. It was a portion of this eastern coast, from the Baie de Cavalaire to the Rade d'Agay, which was chosen as the target area for Operation ANVIL.

In the target area there are three outstanding topographical features, the Massif des Maures, the Toulon-St. Raphael Corridor and the Provence Alps. The Massif is a hill mass about 35 miles long, about ten miles wide at its widest point, and rises to an average height of 1,000 to 1,500 feet. At the base of the Maures are the invasion beaches. The

corridor which lies behind the Massif is formed by the valleys of the Real Martin and Argens Rivers and varies in width from one to six miles. Farther inland are the Provence Alps, slightly higher than the coastal massif, but marked by the same steep slopes with broader valleys connected by low passes. On the east this range runs to the Alps proper, but on the west it drops off to the Durance River.

The Target area comprises a portion of the famed Riviera resort coast with a traditionally mild climate and sparse rainfall, particularly during summer. Most of the time light winds prevail, and gales or complete calms are rare. Cloud ceilings are usually unlimited, though haze over the coast occasionally limits visibility to five or six miles.

Soil in the target area varies from rocky to sandy; much bedrock at the surface makes digging a problem. Streams running from the mountain masses into the coastal area frequently dry up in summer, and even the larger rivers reach an extremely low-water state. However, during the summer occasional thunderstorms create the danger of flash floods. The original forest cover is almost entirely gone, and uncultivated areas are covered with patches of woodland, evergreen, oak, cork oak, pine, and chestnut or low scrub growth of juniper, broom, box, and myrtle, the latter frequently referred to as "maquis". Cultivated portions support olive, fig, almond, mulberry, citrus trees and vineyards, though the poor quality of the soil allows agriculture on a less extensive scale than in other parts of France.

The population is sparse in this region of Mediterranean France and is concentrated mostly in the immediate coastal strips. Because there are many Italians on the Riviera the proportion of native French is lower than in other regions of France. In the target area proper there are no large cities. The adjoining towns of St. Raphael and Frejus, having together a population of 19,000, are the largest settlements.

The road net in the target area is adequate for military operations. Two main highways cross the area; the coast road from Marseille to Nice, and the inland route from Frejus to Aix-en-Provence. There are also a number of secondary roads formerly suitable for military traffic, although many were allowed to deteriorate during the four years under

German control. Roads which run through narrow defiles are commanded by high ground on the flanks and can thus be easily blocked. Road surfaces are generally satisfactory, but the bridges are often old and narrow. In towns many important roads become narrow and winding, permitting only one-way traffic.

The railroads, like the highways, are also limited in the coastal area of southern France. A main line passes from Italy by way of Nice and Cannes and connects with the main north-south trunk line at Marseille; lesser lines cross the immediate beach area and connect the small coast towns with the main east-west line in the interior.

Though the Mediterranean coast of France has four major and four secondary ports, only three minor ports are in the immediate assault area. These minor ports, St. Tropez, Ste. Maxime and St. Raphael, offered a means of supplementing tonnage unloaded over beaches until Toulon, Marseille, and Nice could be made available to handle 10,000-ton Liberty Ships.

Enemy Strength and Capabilities

In planning for *ANVIL*, enemy capabilities, disposition, and defense strategy were a constant influence on final decisions. By the end of July 1944 the Mediterranean Sea was almost completely cleared of German naval power. Enemy naval strength was reduced to a destroyer, a few torpedo and escort boats, and approximately ten U-boats. There is no doubt that the Germans hoped to augment their U-boat fleet by construction and repair activities at Marseille and Toulon, but Allied air attacks not only crippled production facilities but also destroyed those U-boats which were in their pens awaiting repair. In the main, German naval craft were considered to have only a nuisance value and could offer no serious interference to the invasion of southern France.

Intelligence information indicated that by the middle of 1944 the German Luftwaffe had definitely reached a state of decline. Yet its disposition on air fields throughout southern France gave it speed of movement and a certain tactical surprise. Immediately prior to D-Day,

hrc

the most reliable estimates placed German air strength at approximately 200 airplanes either in or adjacent to the target area. It was assumed that in the event of invasion the Germans would be able to draw additional air strength from either Italy or northern Europe, if these squadrons were not already committed elsewhere.

Of the 200 planes assigned to southern France about three-fourths were especially designed for ship bombardment or reconnaissance. This functional distribution of the Luftwaffe suggests that German air strength was concerned mainly with efforts to embarrass Allied shipping in the Mediterranean and thereby impede any attempt at invasion or to discover by reconnaissance the scale and exact location of any landing in southern France.

By the middle of May 1944 increased German reconnaissance activity was observed over the Corsica-Sardinia sea lanes, while during the same period anti-shipping operations showed a marked decrease. This change in functional activity suggests that for the period immediately prior to D-Day the Luftwaffe had abandoned all hope of forestalling any invasion by attacking shipping and was now merely attempting to discover the time, the place, and the scale of the invasion.

The Allies estimated the possible air forces available to Germany in the *ANVIL* and adjacent areas to be 1,515 planes of all types. Of this total 1,085 were thought to be on French air fields in northeastern France. Southern France accounted for another 200-odd and Italy 190. The fact that there were great distances to be covered and that practically all available planes in northern Europe after 6 June were committed in Normandy or attempting to defend German factories and internal supply lines made it highly improbable that any additional planes could be spared for southern France. The most likely possibility seemed to be that 40 to 50 planes might be sent from northern Italy if the tactical situation permitted.

However, to checkmate enemy air activity during the critical period of the invasion, planning had to take into account three distinct possibilities: the sending of strong reinforcements into the assault area by withdrawing air power already committed elsewhere, the with-

drawing immediately of most of the aircraft stationed in southern France to prevent its destruction by a superior Allied airforce, or the sending for minor reinforcements from Italy and southwest Germany for restricted use over the immediate assault area.

The presence of any large-scale reinforcements would indicate a German willingness to risk heavy air losses in order to defend what they considered as vital territory. An immediate withdrawal of the greater part of their aircraft would suggest an opposite attitude on the part of the German High Command. Minor reinforcements sent into the area would merely convey the impression that the Luftwaffe was putting up a token defense with the idea of doing what damage possible and then of withdrawing to safety.

41. On the basis of Allied pre-D-Day intelligence the general opinion was that enemy air activity would soon dissipate itself. On D-Day and shortly thereafter there were expected the usual anti-shipping activities and sorties against Allied ground forces in an attempt to impede the establishment of a beachhead. However, it was thought that these activities would be so costly to the Germans that after three or four days the Luftwaffe would confine itself to isolated sneak raids and strafing of Allied forward positions. Finally, even this would degenerate into routine reconnaissance patrols for purposes of intelligence.

German Troop Dispositions

The utilization of the most advantageous terrain positions was the prime consideration in German ground force defense plans. In general terms, the delta of the Rhone River is considered the focal point for lines of communication running in all directions. The route northward up the Rhone Valley has always been the principal avenue of entry from the Mediterranean into the heart of France. At Lyon this route branches into roads northwest into the Loire Valley, north to the Paris Basin, and northeast into the approaches to Belfort Gap.

Prior to D-Day the Nineteenth German Army had at its disposal for the defense of southern France, nine divisions stationed along the Mediterranean coast and at strategic points in the interior. The

precise location at which the Allies would debark if they came was unknown to the Germans, so the entire coast required complete defensive coverage. Moreover, once an Allied landing point had become known, it would be necessary to move troops quickly to repel the invasion; and at the same time certain strategic locations must be occupied to protect flanks and internal supply lines.

To satisfy these basic requirements the Nineteenth Army distributed its nine available divisions and made such defensive preparations as were possible. The 716th Infantry Division was stationed in the extreme southwest at Perpignan, for this town intercepted the coastal route from Spain to France and served as the chief strategic point for the protection of the west flank. To the north at Narbonne was the 198th Infantry Division, and in and about Montpellier the 189th Reserve Division, both of which were in position to dominate the inland route from the Mediterranean to the Garonne Valley by way of the Toulouse-Carcassonne depression. The 338th Infantry Division was centered about Arles and served to defend both the Mediterranean coast and the mouth of the Rhone River. The 244th and the 242nd Infantry Divisions were garrisoned at Marseille and at Toulon, and both were in position for the defense of their respective seaports.

On the extreme eastern segment of the French coast, in the Cannes-Nice area, was the 148th Reserve Division. It was entrusted not only with defending beaches in the sector but also with securing the area against any movement along the coast or from a landing in the Genoa area. The two remaining divisions were situated at nodal points north of the coastline. One of these, the 11th Panzer, had been located near Bordeaux; but by D-Day was in movement toward the Rhone. The other, the 157th Reserve Division, was a training division some of whose elements had been committed against the Maquis.

These nine German divisions formed the defensive pattern for the Nineteenth Army in southern France. Their composition, strength, and fire-power varied to such a degree that a brief analysis of each division is necessary to clarify the character of their subsequent performances. The 716th Infantry Division at Perpignan had undergone heavy losses in Normandy and had been sent south to refit. It was now

reduced to about 8,000 men with an effective fire power of about 50 percent. The 198th Infantry Division had recently been shifted to France from the Russian front and upon reorganization had acquired a large percentage of Bohemians and Czechs. It had an estimated strength of 10,500 men but with a somewhat reduced fire-power. Though the 189th Reserve Division was reputed to have a strength of four infantry battalions and one artillery battalion, it was never able to get together more than a battle group consisting of portions of two regiments for the battle of southern France.

The 338th Infantry Division, composed largely of limited service personnel, had sent an equivalent of four battalions as reinforcements to the Brittany-Normandy front. Only two understrength regiments were available to throw against the Seventh Army. The 242nd and 244th Infantry Divisions defending Toulon and Marseille were at 85 percent of normal strength in personnel, which included many young men without much combat experience. The 148th and the 157th Reserve Infantry Divisions on the eastern flank were believed to be relatively powerful, at full divisional strength; but their battle experience was not known. The only genuinely mobile unit was the 11th Panzer Division, which had seen action in Russia. It was considered to be up to strength with eight infantry battalions but was short one of its tank battalions.

This defensive set-up in southern France was the result of a redistribution of forces by the German High Command after Allied landings in Normandy. Between the June invasion and August the 9th Panzer and the 271st, 272nd, and the 277th Infantry Divisions had been withdrawn from the Nineteenth Army and ordered north. To compensate for these losses the 11th Panzer, the 198th and the 716th Infantry Divisions were transferred to southern France. In addition to the 11th Panzer Division, still of considerable strength, there were only five reasonably effective infantry divisions available to the Nineteenth Army. Furthermore, the actual combat effectiveness of this defending force was weakened by the inclusion of many non-Germanic elements, who were presumed to be serving under duress. Finally, the grave shortage of motor vehicles and fuel, plus the constant threat of attack

by the French Forces of the Interior, had a profound effect on enemy morale. For example, the 157th Reserve Division, while substantially intact, had been dissipated in the mountain strongholds of the Maquis.

This lack of strength and fire-power could be remedied only by the introduction of troops and equipment from outside the immediate area of southern France. However, German commitments on other fronts and lack of sufficient reserves in Germany proper made it quite unlikely that reinforcements in sufficient strength could be counted on.

It was thought that a possible German reaction to Allied landings would be a withdrawal from the immediate coastal area to the Rhone Valley with a serious attempt to defend Marseille and Toulon. Because the terrain of the beach area is such as to preclude the effective use of mobile troops, the logical plan of withdrawal would be to fall back to the Rhone Valley and take up defensive positions. The prediction of a stubborn defense at Marseille and Toulon was based on the assumption that denial to the Allies of the use of large ports would delay a rapid build-up. This delay might allow the Germans to gain sufficient time to assemble their forces for a major defensive stand in the lower Rhone Valley or to withdraw them northward to safety.

Any Allied landing between Marseille and Nice would probably encounter elements of the 148th Infantry Division along the eastern segment of the Mediterranean coast and units of the 242nd Infantry Division in and about Toulon. As soon as the focus and magnitude of the invasion became clear to the German High Command, it was assumed that defense divisions would be maneuvered to meet the initial thrust and to modify the pattern of divisional distribution to prevent isolation or encirclement of those elements not yet actively committed to combat.

The German Defense System

Between November 1942 and September 1943 southern France had been divided into German and Italian zones of defense. The line of demarcation between these zones ran east of Toulon and left the Germans responsible for defending the two principal French ports on the

Mediterranean. After the collapse of Italy in September 1943 the Germans were faced with the problem of defending the entire French Mediterranean coast. Defenses were quickly installed to make the chain of fortifications from Spain to Italy complete.

It was known that, in the event of an Allied landing, the German High Command would immediately take the following steps: 1. Order all troops to their assembly areas. 2. Proclaim a state of siege. 3. Forbid the civilian population to circulate except certain special classes of workers and officials. 4. Requisition all able-bodied men and serviceable vehicles. 5. Guard all railroads and other communication facilities. 6. Demolish all machine shops, garages, and other installations which might be of service to the Allies. 7. Require the French to abide closely by the terms of the Armistice of 1940. In addition, trustworthy



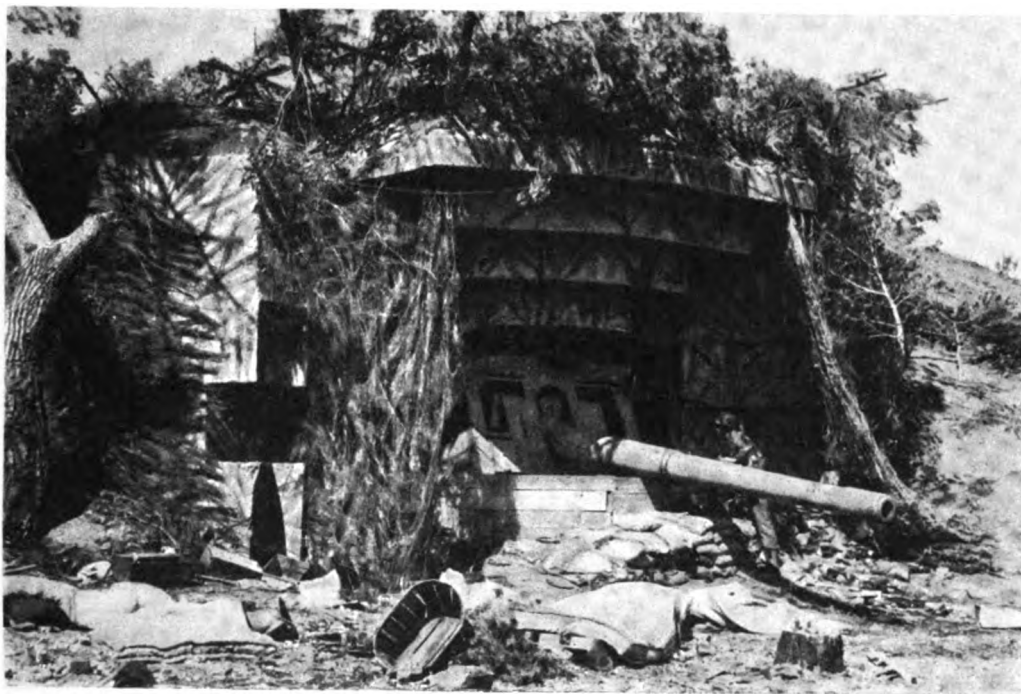
AMERICAN BEACH DEMOLITION CLEARING MINES, BLASTING GUN POSITIONS

"... a general policy of laying mines in strips along the coast was carried out by the Germans, and some difficulty was encountered because of mines in the early phases of the landing ..."

Todt workers and collaborating French were to be formed into defensive detachments, and it was even reported that certain native North African prisoners of war were to be turned loose to create disorder.

A general policy of laying mines in strips along the coast was carried out by the Germans. As early as April 1944 it was reported that the construction of underwater obstacles had commenced. Off-shore defense measures were used chiefly in and around the big ports, and included anti-torpedo and anti-submarine booms and nets, fire barges, and warning devices, such as hydrophones and infra-red barrages.

The enemy made the maximum use of artillery for coastal defense purposes. Batteries included railroad guns, heavy coast artillery, German field pieces, old French and Italian equipment, and even



A GERMAN 8-INCH GUN IN CONCRETE INSTALLATION

" . . . The enemy made the maximum use of artillery for coastal defense purposes . . . "

naval guns transferred from French warships scuttled in Toulon harbor. German policy in the target area was to allot coast defense respon-

sibility to the division charged with defending that sector. Multi-purpose guns near the beaches were placed in positions so as to be fired at sea targets as well as to cover dead spaces between the more important coastal batteries. There was a system of anti-aircraft searchlights throughout the target area, and the whole coastal strip was covered by radar stations.



A GERMAN PLOTTER AND RANGEFINDER INSTALLATION LOOKING
OUT TO SEA

" . . . The whole coastal strip was covered by radar stations . . . "

In general, local defenses along the Mediterranean coast were not deep. They were constructed around a system of strongpoints which involved concrete pillboxes and subsidiary features, such as barbed wire and mine fields. The whole system of defensive works embraced blockhouses, pillboxes, personnel shelter, and command posts, often very skillfully camouflaged as local buildings. There was also considerable improvisation; tank turrets were mounted on concrete as pillboxes or tanks were almost completely buried with only the top of the

turret and the gun exposed above ground. The system of beach defenses generally extended inland only so far as was necessary to take advantage of the terrain.

Roadblocks and antitank obstacles were prepared extensively where tank or vehicular traffic might be expected. Tank obstacles



**A GERMAN CONCRETE ROADBLOCK ALONG THE ST. RAPHAEL
WATERFRONT**

" . . . Roadblocks and anti-tank obstacles were prepared extensively where tank or vehicular traffic might be expected . . . "

included walls and ditches, concrete cubes, cones, pyramids, dragon's teeth, steel rail, timbers, and antitank blockhouses. Roadblocks in the beach area were usually defended by machine guns and light artillery. In many places previously prepared obstacles were in readiness along the side of the roads to be put into use if the situation required.

From experience gained in Italy and later in Normandy it was expected that the Germans would make extensive use of mines and

demolitions. Mines were planted in anti-personnel and antitank minefields blocking all obvious avenues of approach and in road-beds which ran from the beaches to the main lateral highways. Demolition charges were prepared for highway and railroad bridges, viaducts, dams, tunnels, and in banks along sides of roads where landslides could be started.

The Invasion Beaches

The main assault area extended approximately 45 miles along the coast from the Bay of Cavalaire to the Rade of Agay. It included 16 individual beaches numbered serially from west to east and divided into the principal divisional assault area known as Alpha, Delta, and Camel. The individual beaches varied from 500 yards to 4,500 yards in length and from ten to 50 yards in width, each landing area presenting an individual topographical problem.

On the extreme western flank along the Bay of Cavalaire and the Bay of Pampelonne are the "Alpha" beaches, 259, 260, 260-A, 261 and 261-A. Beaches 259 and 260 are backed by a narrow belt of tree-covered dunes, behind which run a highway and a narrow-gauge railroad. To the southwest are wooded slopes and the village of Cavalaire and to the east cultivated fields. Several small streams traverse the area but are such as to present no obstacle to the advance of infantry. However, because of soft sand it was assumed that preparation would be necessary to insure that wheeled vehicles could negotiate the first 50 yards from the water's edge and gain the hard ground and highway beyond.

The defenses in the Alpha area were considered moderate. There were three or four casemates, a dozen or so pillboxes, and 17 machine guns. On the high ground beyond were located eight light antiaircraft guns and at the extreme western end four batteries of fixed guns of medium caliber. Parallel to the shore line of Beach 259, about 60 yards out, were concrete pyramids covered by fire from artillery and machine guns. Barbed wire extended some 800 yards in the center of the beach and the whole area was thought to be thoroughly mined. Intelligence reports prior to D-Day indicated that there were probably two companies of 100 men each manning the defenses.

Beach 261 stretches along the Bay of Pampelonne for a distance of 4,500 yards between the rocky points of Cape Pinet and Bonne Terasse. The terrain consists of soft sand with a wooded slope in the center and flat plain on either end. The gradient is sufficient for small landing craft, such as LCIs or LCVPs, to nose up to shore; but larger craft would require pontoons for a dry landing. Enemy defenses were considered moderate and consisted of a single row of piles about 150 feet off shore, pillboxes, wire, and mine fields. There were roadblocks placed across all exits and two coastal batteries some distance to the rear. It was estimated that there was an understrength enemy battalion of 400 men defending the area.

Beaches in the "Delta" assault area, 262, 262-A, 263, 263-A, 263-B, and 263-C are in the vicinity of St. Tropez and Ste. Maxime. Those on the northern shore of the Gulf of St. Tropez are partially protected from the surf. Off shore was a single line of floats designed to support an anti-submarine net and block the channel into the harbor of St. Tropez. The north end of Beach 262 was particularly strongly defended, and there were pillboxes and casemates at the southern end as well. Between these two strongpoints the Germans had placed a double apron of barbed wire to be covered by fire and supplemented by mine fields. Behind the beach itself the terrain is flat and swampy and interspersed by small streams. This area was covered by a series of small mine fields staggered in such a way as to block all obvious exits. The main arterial highway which runs from Marseille to Nice along the northern shore of the Gulf was also heavily mined.

A few miles to the east, at the seaward end of the Gulf of St. Tropez, are two beaches near the town of Ste. Maxime. From the point of view of topography, they are similar to those at the other end of the gulf. In defenses they were perhaps less strong. One of the beaches is flanked by a seawall, and on the other the Germans had constructed an antitank wall 900 feet long and six feet thick. Its height was insufficient to hamper infantry in a scramble landing, but it had to be breached before tanks and vehicles could reach the coastal highway. A line of floats blocked the entrance into the harbor of Ste. Maxime.

East of Ste. Maxime along the inner curve of Bougnon Bay are three small sand and shingle beaches backed by the usual belt of dunes, which run up to the coastal road and narrow gauge railroad. Beyond this are steep wooded slopes which merge into cultivated areas when the terrain becomes more level. At Garonnette Beach 263-C is cut in two by the Garonnette River. Because of an almost vertical embankment 40 to 50 feet high, only by way of the extreme eastern end does the terrain offer an exit to the coastal road. These three beaches were considered to be lightly defended but were well mined, flanked in part by an antitank wall, and protected by wire. Pillboxes were located at strategic points, and several batteries of coastal guns covered the approaches from the sea.

The third and final group of beaches, 264, 264-A, 264-B, 265, and 265-A, made up the "Camel" assault area and extended from Point St. Aygulf to Antheor. Beaches 264 and 264-A in the Frejus-St. Raphael area were heavily defended by underwater mine fields and off-shore concrete obstacles. On all roads leading from the beach area, on important streets in the two towns, and even on the coastal highway itself, there were carefully-planted mine fields, antitank ditches, and road blocks consisting of dragon's teeth and concrete pillars.

Beach 265 at the head of the Rade of Agay was considered strongly defended. It is semi-circular in shape and bounded on the west by a small boat harbor and on the east by a low, rocky point. Directly behind is the coast road and railroad, and the connecting terrain is flat and cultivated. This meant that all types of landing craft could come up to the beach, but soft sand would make preparation of a road necessary for tracked and wheeled vehicles.

There were six batteries of light coast defense guns augmented by well camouflaged pillboxes, wire, and mines so located as to take advantage of excellent defensive terrain features. The Rade of Agay a series of floats was anchored off shore to support an anti-submarine net and was reported mined to a vertical depth of from 20 to 50 fathoms. A 150-yard antitank wall in the center of the beach was protected from the sea approach by a mine field 300 yards long. Behind the wall was another mine field, and still farther back on the high ground ad-

jacent to the highway and railroad was a third. Three highway bridges opposite the beach area had been destroyed previous to D-Day, and the railroad bridge over the Agay River prepared for demolition. A few hundred yards to the rear of the highway the Germans had installed two radar stations.

West of the Rade of Agay and facing south, Beach 264 extends from Cap Drammont, a steep red cliff, to the west. Quarried rock rises behind the sand and shingle beach. The main coastal road and railroad run close to the shore; the best exit to the road is at the extreme eastern end of the beach. At Antheor on the other side of the Rade and facing southeast is 265-A, a small beach of fine sand 100 yards long and 30 yards wide at the head of a cove with steep and rocky sides. The beach is backed by the road and a sharply rising coastline, behind which is a high viaduct carrying the main railway line. Hence it was assumed that Infantry could land without difficulty and move on to the coast road, but that for vehicles extensive preparation would be necessary. These two minor beaches, because they were considered lightly defended, were chosen for Camel assault at H-Hour. *END*

About seven miles off the coast of the target area are the islands of Levant and Port Cros. Their strategic location made them a menace to convoys approaching the beaches, and their neutralization was considered essential. For the most part, these islands are beachless with steep cliffs dropping down to the water's edge. The interior consists of scrub-covered hills broken here and there by small patches of cultivated land. On the western end of Port Cros the enemy was reported to have a coastal battery protected by antiaircraft and machine guns. The island of Levant, which lies northeast of Port Cros, was an even greater threat because of its closer proximity to the invasion beaches and convoy route. The most significant fortifications were constructed on the northeastern tip of the island and consisted of three or four 164 mm guns, machine guns, pillboxes, and a searchlight. Four medium coast defense guns were thought to be in position on the other end of the island.

The constantly changing disposition of enemy troops made it necessary for those planning *ANVIL* to reconsider from day to day the

tactics and the logistics of the contemplated operation. After the launching of *OVERLORD* the German High Command was forced to shift to the Normandy front certain divisions previously designated for the defense of southern France. Because replacements in personnel and equipment were difficult to obtain, the defense of the Mediterranean coast, as D-Day approached, was undoubtedly not on the scale that the Germans had originally planned.

If the assaulting forces were successful in breaking through the German coast defense system and establishing a permanent beach-head, the enemy's most logical course would be to take advantage of the defensive terrain, fight delaying actions, and attempt to withdraw his main force to safety. The possibility of a complete German collapse with the immediate cessation of hostilities or, on the other hand, a series of vigorous counterattacks supported by armor and mobile troops were the two extremes which had to be considered by those planning the invasion.

doubt, however, that valuable preliminary work was accomplished during the first half of 1944. For when higher authority definitely decided that the operation against southern France would be mounted in mid-August, final planning was accomplished with remarkably little confusion and delay.

VI Corps Enters Picture

The tentative Army *ANVIL* plan was flown to VI Corps headquarters at Naples on 26 June. In a cover letter to the Commanding General, General Patch explained: "It has not as yet had the approval of the Supreme Allied Commander, and therefore is subject to change. However, it will at least give you and your staff a basis for planning . . . Please submit any changes you may wish to suggest as early as convenient and feel utterly free to comment."



LT. GEN. LUCIAN K. TRUSCOTT
". . . no Salerno . . ."

The next day a reply was returned. There were apparently many points of disagreement, and some of the *ANVIL* information General Truscott found "most disturbing". In his letter to General Patch, dated 27 June 1944, he wrote, "It has been my understanding up to this time that I am to command the actual assault . . . I think it would be highly desirable for me to be present when this plan is presented to the Supreme Allied Commander," In the first place, the proposed chain of command seemed to be creating "a grave risk". Until a beachhead was established, General Truscott felt that assault troops should be under the Assault Force Commander, and only afterwards revert to Army control. "I have no doubt that much of the difficulty that attended the Salerno landing was due to the confused command organization during the assault phase. I sincerely hope that we will not repeat that mistake . . ."

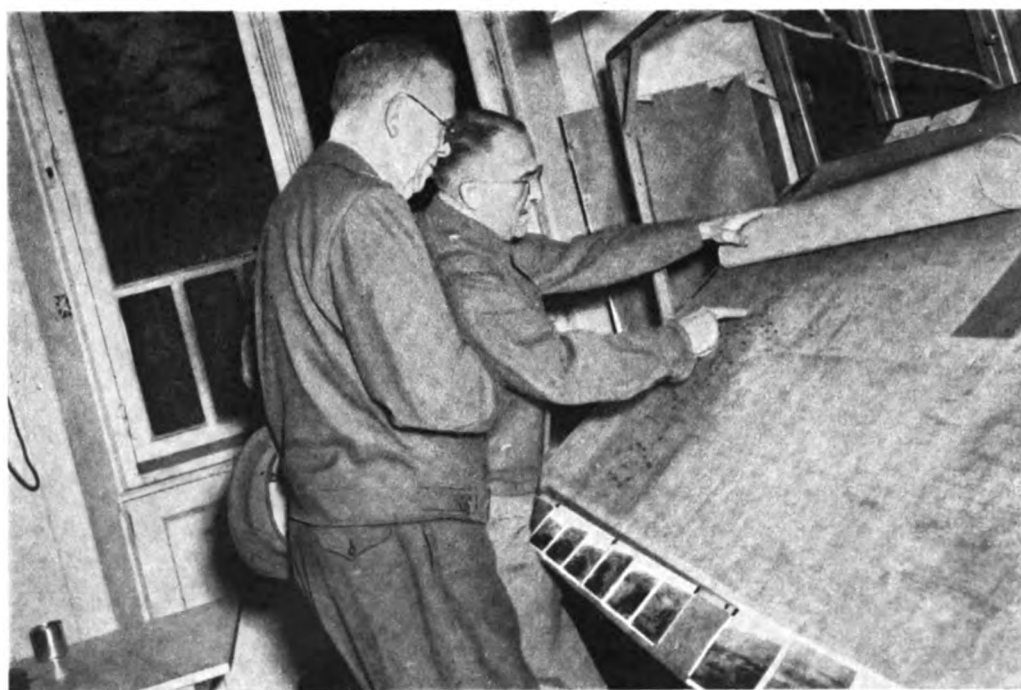
Finally, the general warned against an over extension of the beachhead line in an effort to take in too much of the coast. Fearing a



VICE ADMIRAL ARTHUR K. HEWITT AND LT. GEN. JACOB L. DEVERS
"... once the decision was made, final planning was accomplished with remarkably little confusion and delay . . ."

repetition of "the Anzio error", he suggested that for a three-division front the original limits of the Blue Line should be the maximum undertaken. Any over extension would make impossible the massing of sufficient strength for the advance to the west. There were some other points of disagreement.

General Devers, then in Italy, was also concerned that steps be taken to insure that command be clearly defined during the assault phase. He sent a cable to Major General L. W. Rooks, Deputy Chief of Staff, AFHQ, to arrange a conference with General Patch on the subject and further stating "... I have an idea that an Army Group will event-



GEN. GEORGE C. MARSHALL AND MAJ. GEN. JOHN O'DANIEL (3RD DIV)

"... the invasion of France had first priority in America's world-wide operations ..."

ually come into this after the landing of two armies and additional troops are poured in from other sources". On 28 June General Patch, after a staff meeting, invited VI Corps planning officers to accompany their Commanding General to Force Headquarters at Algiers for a more detailed study of the problem. It was felt desirable that these matters

of disagreement be examined and clarified before the plan was submitted to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, for his final approval.

Since there had never been any other intention than that the assault Corps commander would have untrammelled control of his troops, the apparent difficulties easily reconciled themselves upon discussion. The Seventh Army staff had, during the months which preceded final decision, of necessity gone into great detail and settled matters which — had the Corps been designated earlier — would obviously have been left to the Corps commander. But this detailed planning was necessary if the work was to go forward, and the question of command unity — one on which many bitter lessons had been learned — was not, and never became, a real issue.

The *ANVIL* Outline Plan with latest revisions was presented to General Wilson on 28 June. Lieutenant General A. H. Gammell, AFHQ Chief of Staff, sent word on 2 July that SACMED approved and suggested only that further study be given to the most effective use of the Airborne Division to determine whether it should be used in one concentrated area rather than at three scattered points as was proposed in the outline plan.

The Naples Interlude

Seventh Army Headquarters moved early in July from Algiers, North Africa, to Naples, Italy, opening at the new location on 4 July. Thenceforth the term "Force 163" was not used. In the Flambeau Building on the Naples waterfront, the headquarters enjoyed proximity to French Armee "B" and VI Corps headquarters, also in Naples, and was a half hour's motor trip from Caserta Palace, new site for Headquarters AFHQ. The Seventh Army Headquarters rear echelon, which had moved during May from Palermo, Sicily, to Mostaganau, French North Africa, also moved to Naples.

The Naples move allowed closer supervision of training. VI Corps headquarters had already planned that the 45th Division would arrive at the Amphibious Training Center in the Naples-Salerno area

on 24 June, the 3rd Division on 28 June and the 36th or 85th Division on 6 July. Each division was to receive about three weeks of amphibious training. The program was to culminate in a simulated landing exercise, with conditions on the coast of southern France approximated as closely as possible.

As the congestion of American, French and British troops increased along Via Roma, and as the harbor became daily more crowded with shipping, Seventh Army's staff worked late. Leading military and naval figures of the Mediterranean Theater conferred at the headquarters almost daily. Observers began to arrive. The dusty, impressive Flambeau Building -- once the home of an Italian shipping concern -- shook with the clatter of typewriters. There were a few minor air raids. Anyone who looked at the harbor could see that something was in the wind.

By 8 July Seventh Army Headquarters was in possession of a directive issued by Allied Force Headquarters to Commanders of the Mediterranean Naval and Air Force and to the *DRAGOON* Ground Task Force Commander. The directive was as follows:

1. In accordance with the directive of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the Supreme Allied Commander directs that preparations be made to mount and launch, with a target date of Q 14, the amphibious *ANVIL*. Operation which was presented in outline plan and approved by him on 28 June. The twofold mission of this operation will be:
 - a. To establish a beachhead east of Toulon as a base for the assault and capture of Toulon;
 - b. Thereafter to capture Marseille and exploit toward Lyon and Vichy.
2. Conduct of the operation will conform to the principles of joint command. The Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Theater will provide the Naval forces and will appoint a Naval Task Force Commander. The Naval Task Force Commander will assume command of the entire seaborne expedition from the time of sailing until the Ground Force is firmly established ashore, after which command of ground operations passes to the Ground Forces commander ashore. The Ground Task Force Commander, Headquarters Force 163, is hereby appointed Commander of all Ground Forces taking part in the operation. The Air Commander-in-Chief will nominate an Air Task Force Commander and will provide full air support for the operation.

3. Responsibility for the operations given in paragraph 1 above, will remain with SAC Mediterranean until such time as SCAEF can assume operational control. It is contemplated that this may be effected when SCAEF can also assume the supply responsibilities coincident with control. Until such time as this shift of responsibility is made, directives to Commanders concerned will emanate from this Headquarters.

4. Preparations for the operation will be made on the basis of approximately a three Division assault with an airborne lift of a strength to be decided later. Plans should be made for an ultimate build-up of at least ten divisions as rapidly as available resources will permit.

5. The Commanding General, SOS NATOUSA, will be responsible to AFHQ for mounting the operation.

6. For your information, all concerned are being advised that all available Mediterranean resources not required for Operation *ANVIL* will be used to continue offensive operations in Italy.

7. The French High Command has been advised of the target date for the launching of this operation.

The Navy, in the interest of more effective cooperation, suggested that the Sub-Task Force Commanders be assigned to and placed in contact with the divisions they were actually to work with during the operation. The Navy had no planning staff at the Corps level, and this was all the more reason for working intimately with the divisions. Throughout, Vice Admiral Hewitt, the senior naval officer, was kept in close contact with the progress in training by Headquarters Seventh Army. His representative, Captain English, had offices in the Flambeau Building and worked practically as a member of the Army staff.

Coordinating with French

The employment of French forces and French channels of command came up for final settlement during the course of several planning conferences in July. It was decided that during the early phase of the operation Headquarters Seventh Army would exercise command functions over the U. S. VI Corps and such French contingents as were ashore. Channels of command would thus be direct from Seventh Army to the French Army Commander. However, when a total of two French

Corps had been landed, the French Army Headquarters would assume tactical command of the two corps; and Headquarters Seventh Army would assume the normal tactical and strategical functions of a Headquarters, Army Group, retaining at the same time logistical and administrative functions for the entire *ANVIL* force.

The plan to attach the 1st French Armored Combat Command to the U. S. VI Corps during the assault phase also came up for discussion and clarification. General De Gaulle had only "reluctantly consented to this employment under American command." General de Lattre expected the return of this Combat Command not later than D plus three; its full use was being counted on in the operation against Toulon. However, it was obvious that the VI Corps would need armor not only for the assault but also for its subsequent advance to the northwest, and if there were any questions of command authority or limitations on its employment this arrangement would not be satisfactory. General Truscott suggested that this matter be taken up with the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, without delay.

Combat elements of II French Corps were scheduled to arrive in the Naples area about 8 July. They were to refit and then go promptly to Taranto for loading. Since the French had only a skeleton staff of their II Corps in Italy, it was advised that the remainder be summoned from North Africa in order to supervise properly troop movement and combat loading. The French were short on replacement personnel, but it was understood that they expected to recruit locally after entry into the target area. This was a matter of serious importance for future planning inasmuch as the use of American equipment was involved.

The French High Command was requested early in July to give General Patch immediate operational control of all the Army "B" units. Certain key French Staff Officers were still a part of General Juin's command in Italy. It was urged that they be released as soon as possible so as to be available to work with General de Lattre on final French plans for the operation. Withdrawal of the whole French Expeditionary Corps from Italy was to be completed by 24 July and only a minimum of time was to be allowed for refitting.

The question of Seventh Army control over French troops was agreed to in a letter to the Chief of Staff, AFHQ, from General Bethouart, French Chief of Staff of National Defense. This letter was in part as follows:

I have the honor to inform you that I agree that Army "B" which includes all French formations and units nominated for Operation ANVIL and which are under the command of General of Army de Lattre de Tassigny, be placed with effect from today, 7 July 1944, under the orders of the Commanding General, Force 163.

General Patch shortly thereafter issued a directive to General de Lattre providing that "... Under the direction of this headquarters, you will be responsible for the necessary outline plan, order and instructions, to include the training, equipping and mounting of your forces, passage of your force through the left of the U. S. Corps, and the capture of Toulon".



MAJ. GEN. R. T. FREDERICK

*"... planning, organizing,
training ..."*

Much consideration was given to special troops to be included in the invasion forces. The Invasion Training Center was notified that the 1st Special Service Force would engage in a training program to end with a two-day final exercise between 5 and 20 July. Major General R. T. Frederick, appointed to command the Provisional Airborne Division, began temporary planning, organizing, and training near Rome pending the arrival of an Airborne Division Staff from the United States. The 2nd British Independent Parachute Brigade, which was to be incorporated into the Provisional Airborne Division, now came under the opera-

tional command of Seventh Army. On 8 July NATOUSA directed that the Seventh Army Airborne Division (Provisional) be organized and trained.

In a message to General Eisenhower on 4 July, General Wilson had shown some concern over the amount of the airborne lift to be made

available. Since the decision had been made to increase the assault to three divisions, the boundaries of the target area would likewise be increased, and more extensive airborne operations were designed to block the movement of enemy reserves into the assault area. General Wilson asked for "not less than 384 operational aircraft in addition to those at present in the Mediterranean"

The limited availability of troops and air lift was one reason for the abandonment of two suggested airborne operations in connection with *ANVIL*. One was a proposal from Washington that a force consisting of one airborne division and three air landed infantry divisions attack about D plus ten in the vicinity of Avignon. Another was Plan *CAIMAN*, an operation urged by General de Gaulle as a means of supporting Maquis in the Massif Centrale. General Wilson stated that it would be impossible to carry out *CAIMAN*, or even a smaller operation, until *ANVIL* had been firmly lodged.

On 20 July Troop Carrier Groups allocated to *ANVIL* began to arrive at Italian bases from the United Kingdom. The Airborne Plan was studied in order to review the feasibility of securing and assembling gliders, completing training, and mounting the operation in the remaining time available. Brigadier General P. L. Williams assumed command of the Provisional Troop Carrier Air Division.

A most vital mission, that of landing prior to H-Hour in the Cape Negre area and isolating the target area on the west, had early in the planning stage been entrusted to the French Groupe de Commandos under Lieutenant Colonel Georges Bouvet. Another special force requiring consideration was the French Naval Assault Group, a demolition party which was to land on the right flank in the vicinity of Pointe des Trayas.

Questions of Tactics

A Commanders' Conference held on 12 July took up the following topics with relation to Operation *ANVIL*: air action prior to and on D-Day, assault loading, further development in the use of airborne troops, and the relation of the battle in Italy to the invasion of

southern France. Two days later Admiral Hewitt informed General Truscott of a new naval dissent to the *ANVIL* proposals. "I believe," he wrote, "that the proposal to land the second assault from LCI(L)s is unsound. It is going to run into trouble when any sort of resistance exists, as experience at Elba only too well showed. When an LCI(L) gets hit you lose about 200 soldiers. If an LCVP gets hit you lose only about 30. At Elba the initial wave in the smaller craft got in. The LCI(L)s attempting to follow could not get in" The unfortunate big-boat follow-up waves in the operation against the Mediterranean island on 17 June 1944 had been vulnerable targets for artillery fire.

Throughout the remainder of July tactical planning centered around what was to be accomplished by the pre-H-Hour air and naval bombardment and the final coordination of the various outline plans. For example, the enemy-held islands of Levant and Port Cros were a definite menace to the 3rd Division beaches on Cavalaire Bay. The Navy was insistent that these hostile shore batteries be neutralized, or else assault shipping in this area would be within easy gun range. This assignment was given to the First Special Service Force which was to land under cover of darkness on the night prior to D-Day.

The pre-D-Day bombing plan envisioned attacks on enemy lines of communications in northern Italy and southern France. The target area was to be isolated by the destruction of road and railroad bridges. At the same time, however, a general bombardment was to be kept up along the whole Mediterranean coast. The enemy was to be given the impression that the main assault might come either in the Genoa area or at Sete near the Spanish border. On D minus 1 the bombing attack was to shift to the islands of Levant and Port Cros and on D-Day to the assault area to neutralize coastal batteries and support ground operations.

The question was also raised of the advisability of postponing H-Hour from 0800 to 0900 hours. The contention was that "an effective naval bombardment could not be carried on simultaneously with that from the air." Dust and smoke would interfere with the observation of spotting planes. The Spotters might mistake bomb bursts for shell bursts and consequently confuse the control of naval fire. There were, however,

many disadvantages to prolonging the pre-H-Hour neutralization effort. It was decided that "the 0800 H-Hour should stand", and that the air attack and naval bombardment must be concurrent.

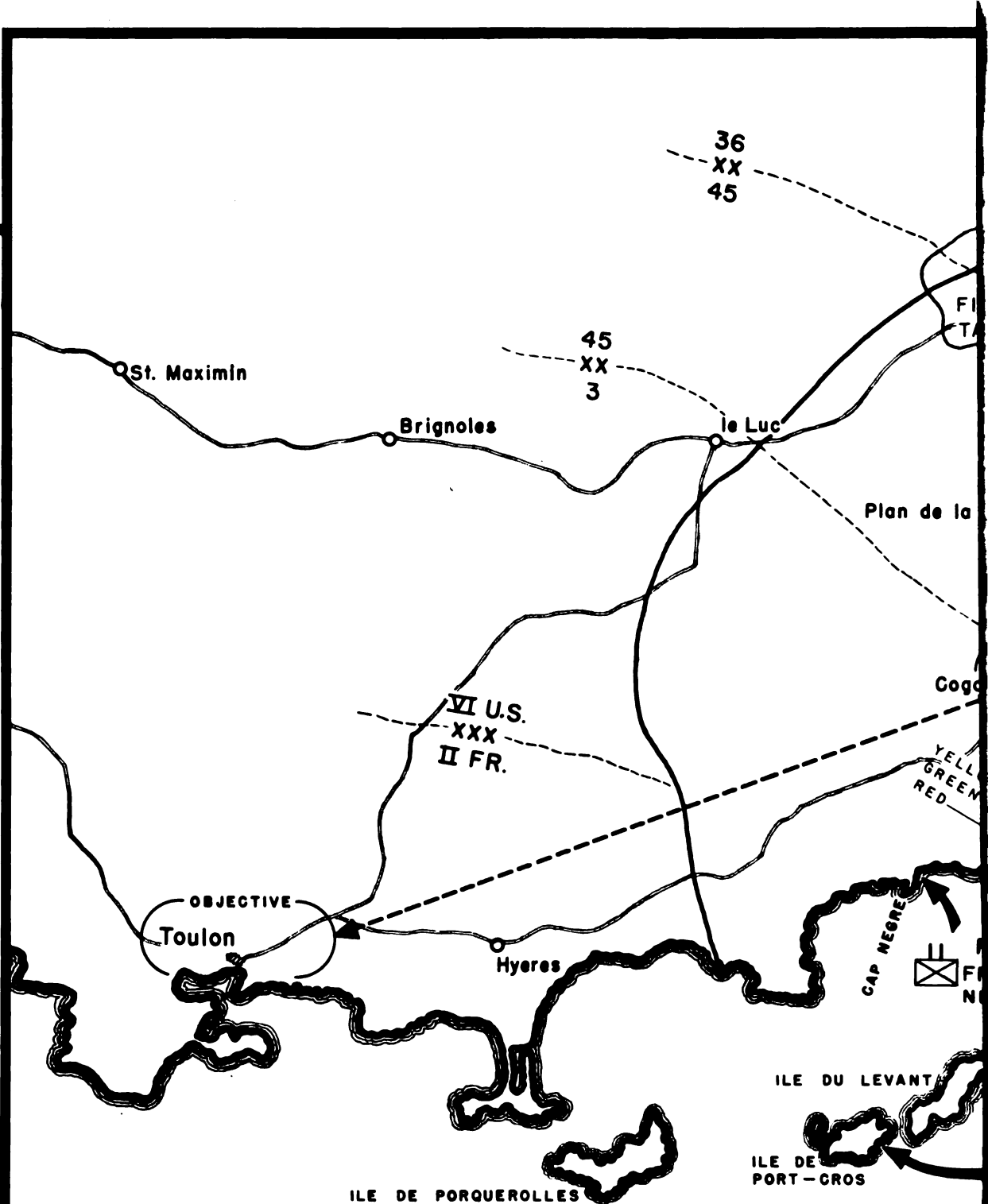
ANVIL becomes DRAGOON

By direction of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, after 1 August the word *ANVIL* was no longer used. The operation would now be referred to as *DRAGOON*. So-called "Bigot" security instructions and procedure remained in force.

On the same date the Supreme Allied Commander's Conference made several important decisions regarding pre-H-Hour activities. General de Lattre had previously suggested that the forest regions in the Maures Mountains northeast of Toulon should be burned by the Air Corps prior to D-Day. The extremely dry timber, heavy underbrush and prevailing winds, he stated, constituted a great fire hazard. However, it was decided at the 1 August conference that there would be "no intentional burning of these forests". Plans were to be drawn up to cover a twenty-four hour delay in H-Hour "which might be necessitated by unfavorable weather conditions". Further details for the deceptive bombing plan of the Mediterranean area were discussed, and it was decided that Sete should have an additional attack by heavy bombers on D minus 5.

Whether the invasion force could actually make the landing without drastic interference from under-water obstacles was a question which troubled General Truscott. On 1 August he told Admiral Hewitt, "I do not believe we can justify sending an assault onto a beach until we have ascertained by actual reconnaissance that assault craft can actually reach the beach . . ."

"I believe," Admiral Hewitt replied the next day, "that the menace of underwater obstacles has been somewhat exaggerated . . ." Last minute reconnaissance would disclose, he argued, only little new information, and would "seriously risk disclosing the *exact* beaches in which we are interested". The difficulties of *OVERLORD*, which had been a special condition of the English Channel and the Normandy coast,



FINAL PLAN ANVIL

he felt, had now become a mental hazard. The admiral believed that neither factors of bathymetry or tidal range nor the crucial element of tactical security substantiated the new fears and suggestions. "I know of no preliminary reconnaissance, other than actually running boats through the obstacles, which will *ensure* that boats can beach . . ." he wrote. In the event that LCVPs could not push through, LCTs would most certainly be used to ram any remaining obstacles in order to insure a successful landing.

During the first weeks of August, tactical planning was brought to its final conclusion. Instructions to the Commanding Generals of the U.S. VI Corps and French Army B were completed. The pre-H-Hour attack on the islands of Levant and Port Cros was changed from 0100 hours on D-Day, with vessels 26 miles off the coast at dusk to 0130 with the ships 35 miles off shore at dusk. If they came in too close enemy radar might be alerted or movement observed visually.

Final Outline Plans

Although small details were subject to change up to the very moment of sailing, the broader aspects of *ANVIL*'s tactical concept stood firm. The following paragraphs briefly sum up the final ground, naval and air plans for the operation.

"Army Ground and Airborne Plan": The general mission was to establish a beachhead east of Toulon as a base for the assault, to capture Toulon and then Marseille and exploit towards Lyon and Vichy. For reasons of security and convenience the various forces were given code names according to their missions.

Kodak Force consisted of VI Corps Headquarters, and its assigned units: the 3rd, 45th, and 36th Infantry Divisions, plus one French Armored Combat Command and supporting troops. *Kodak's* mission was to land three infantry divisions (reinforced) at H-Hour over the beaches between Cape Cavalaire and Agay. A rapid advance was to be made inland to contact the Airborne Task Force. As soon as the beaches were cleared the French Armored Combat Command would land. The beachhead was to be extended to the "Blue Line", the D plus 2 objec-

tive, and airfield sites secured in the Argens Valley between Frejus and Le Muy. Further advances to the west and northwest would protect the right flank of the Army; after the II French Corps was established ashore, contact was to be maintained. Kodak would be prepared to release the French Armored Combat Command, the French Groupe de Commandos, and all airborne forces to Army control on Army order.

Garbo Force consisted of Detachment, Headquarters French Army B, French II Corps with the 1st French Motorized, 3rd Algerian, and 9th Colonial Infantry Divisions plus the 1st French Armored Division (less 1 Combat Command) and supporting troops. Landing over beaches in the St. Tropez-Cavalaire Area on D plus 1, it was to pass through the left of the U.S. VI Corps and capture Toulon. By D plus 9 the French 9th Colonial Division, and two attached groups of Tabors (Gourniers) were to be landed in the Le Lavandou-Hyeres area. The remainder of the 1st French Armored Division was to land by D plus 25. After the capture of Toulon the attack was to be continued against Marseille and to the northwest. Contact on the right would be maintained with U.S. VI Corps.

Rugby Force consisted of the Seventh Army Provisional Airborne Division composed of the 2nd British Independent Parachute Brigade, one Parachute RCT, two Parachute Battalions, one Infantry Glider Battalion and supporting troops. It was to land on the high ground north and east of Le Muy and on the high ground north of Grimaud. The primary mission was to prevent the movement of enemy forces into the assault area from the west and northwest. Prior to dark on D-Day, Le Muy was to be cleared of enemy forces and the area secured for subsequent glider landings. Thus, Rugby Force would assault enemy positions from the rear and assist the advance of seaborne forces by neutralizing enemy installations to the east within the range of weapons. Bridges in the Airborne Division area were to be prepared for demolition, but no bridges were to be blown except on order of the Task Force Commander. Upon contact, the Rugby Force would pass to U. S. VI Corps control and would revert to Army reserve on Army order.

Sitka Force or the 1st Special Service Force was to land under the cover of darkness prior to H-Hour and neutralize all enemy defenses

on the islands of Port Cros and Levant. It would subsequently be prepared to withdraw to the mainland and reorganize as the *Satan Force* for the capture of the Island of Porquerolles.

Romeo Force or the French Groupe de Commandos was to land under cover of darkness prior to H-Hour and destroy enemy defenses on Cape Negre. The coastal highway in the vicinity of the Cape was to be blocked and the high ground two miles to the north seized. It would protect the left flank of the assault and upon contact would come under control of the U.S. VI Corps and revert to Army reserve on Army order.

Rosie Force consisted of the French Naval Assault Group a demolition party, which was to land in the vicinity of Pointe des Trayas on the night before D-Day. Its mission was to execute demolitions on the Cannes - St. Raphael and Cannes - Frejus roads and then fall back on the Army right flank.

Naval Plan. The mission of the Eighth Fleet was to establish the Seventh Army firmly ashore and to support its advance westward for the capture of Toulon and Marseille. The Fleet was responsible for the Army build-up and maintenance on the beach until no longer required after the capture and utilization of ports. It was to be subdivided into six forces, each with a specific mission.

The Control Force was to provide naval beach control and establish and operate naval fuel facilities on shore in the assault area. Navigational markers and air beacon markers were to be established, and diversionary operations conducted. The Control Force would protect the assault convoys from hostile surface or submarine units, and would provide convoy control and escort for shipping outside the assault area.

Alpha Attack Force was to establish the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division on selected beaches in the Pampelonne-Cavalaire area beginning at H-Hour on D-Day. By D plus one it would be prepared to land advance units of French Army B. It was to receive and place five pontoon causeways on Beach 261 and five on Beach 259 and at the earliest possible opportunity unload special Air Force equipment on the Island

of Port Cros. Its naval gun-fire would neutralize enemy batteries threatening transports, landing craft, or the beaches themselves.

Delta Attack Force was to establish the U.S. 45th Infantry Division on selected beaches in the St. Tropez-Bougnon area beginning at H-Hour on D-Day. Five pontoon causeways were to be delivered that day to Beach 261, and the port facilities of St. Tropez exploited. By D plus one the Force was to be prepared to assist Alpha Force in landing French Army "B" over selected beaches in the St. Tropez area.

Camel Attack Force was to establish the U. S. 36th Infantry Division and one Combat Command of the 1st French Armored Division on St. Raphael Antheor beaches beginning at H-Hour on D-Day. As soon as the beaches were cleared, it was to prepare to land another French Combat Command. The Force was to insure that the proper number of pontoon causeways were delivered to Beach 259 for unloading French armored equipment, insure the safety by special measures of Troop Carrier aircraft, and expedite the unloading and turn-around of Air Force LST shuttles from Corsica. Its naval gunfire was to neutralize threatening enemy batteries.

Support Force was to establish the 1st Special Service Force (*Sitka*) on the islands of Levant and Port Cros, and the French Groupe de Commandos (*Romeo*) in the vicinity of Cape Negre. Its bombardment would support the military operations, and after the initial assault phases the Force was to support the Army's westward advance and assign necessary sweeping forces.

Aircraft Carrier Force, the sixth of the Eighth Fleet's subdivisions, was to provide the maximum fighter protection, spotting aircraft, and close support missions. It was to be prepared to transfer aircraft to captured airfields, and would provide its own protection against enemy air and submarine forces.

Air Plan. The Commanding General of the XII Tactical Air Command, Brigadier General Gordon P. Saville, was designated the Air Task Force Commander and charged with all detailed air planning for operation *ANVIL*. From the point of view of time, air operations were broken down into four phases: I. Air offensive operations prior to



BRIG. GEN. GORDON P. SAVILLE
 "... detailed air planning ..."

D minus five. II. Period D minus five to 0350 hours D-Day, known as Operation *NUTMEG*. III. Period 0350 hours D-Day to H-Hour (0800 hours), known as Operation *YOKUM*. IV. Period after H-Hour, known as Operation *DUCROT*.

From the functional approach air operations were further subdivided into: (1) Offensive operations, (2) Defensive operations, (3) Air-Sea Rescue operations, (4) Tactical Reconnaissance, Artillery Reconnaissance and Naval Gunfire Spotting, and (5) Troop Carrier operations.

Air offensive operations in support of *ANVIL* actually began as far back as 28 April 1944 when heavy bombers attacked Toulon. Between then and 10 August, during the preliminary air phases of *ANVIL*, Mediterranean Allied Air Force had dropped more than 12,500 tons of bombs on southern France. Phase II (Operation *NUTMEG*) beginning on 10 August was to continue offensive Air Force responsibilities by attacking enemy coastal batteries, radar stations and harassing coastal defense troops while at the same time isolating the target area by the destruction of highway bridges across the Rhone River.

In order not to jeopardize tactical surprise this phase was to be carried out simultaneously with a cover plan which included the bombardment of identical targets between Via Reggio in Italy and Beziers near the Franco-Spanish border. The intensity of the cover plan, it was hoped, would be sufficient to conceal true Allied intentions until about 1800 the evening of D minus one.

Phase III (Operation *YOKUM*) would begin one hour after the conclusion of *NUTMEG* and last until H-Hour. Its purpose was to cause maximum destruction to enemy coastal and beach defenses utilizing all available forces. Twelve groups of escorted heavy bombers plus all available medium and fighter bombers were allocated for the attack. Fighter and medium bombers were to attack enemy coastal guns seen

firing, while formations of heavy and medium bombers carried out attacks against the assault beaches with the object of beating down underwater obstacles and of destroying beach defenses.

Phase IV (Operation *DUCROT*) beginning after H-Hour would continue the offensive started in Phase I to interdict enemy communications. This was not only to complete destruction of bridges on the Rhone and Isere Rivers and to extend the area of isolation outwards but also to give close tactical support to ground forces by fighters and fighter-bombers.

The plan for air defensive operations provided a constant air cover, both by day and by night, of fighter and night-fighter aircraft. Escorts were also to be furnished to bombers and troop carrier planes unless specifically charged to some other command. Fighter sweeps and area cover were to be provided in accordance with the demands of the situation and the availability of fighter aircraft.

Plans for tactical reconnaissance and aircraft spotting emphasized both the rapid transmittal of information by broadcasting in "the clear", the size and location of enemy concentrations, and accurate observation and direction of naval gunfire. Naval spotting missions were also to be used for field artillery until the Army's own observers were in a position to take over the work.

The Provisional Troop Carrier Air Division was assigned the mission of lifting the Seventh Army Airborne Division consisting of both parachute and glider-borne troops. Subsequent missions were to include re-supply of airborne units and air evacuation. From home bases in Italy 32 squadrons of troop carrier planes totalling 415 aircraft were to fly to the target area in nine ship Vee of Vees for aircraft carrying paratroops and in Pair of Pairs echeloned to the right for towships with gliders. Beaufighters and Spitfires were assigned to provide air cover. The first jumps were to be made just before daylight on D-Day, and the first re-supply mission was planned for the late afternoon of the same day. For purposes of identification routes were chosen with great care and beacon ships were spotted along the route to assist in

navigation. Planes were also to show amber colored recognition lights up to 40 miles from the French coast enroute to the drop zones.

Final Supply Planning

Pre-planning accomplished by Force supply services during the long period of uncertainty which surrounded *ANVIL* constituted a firm base for consummation of necessary arrangements after a decision had finally been made to mount the operation. Definite responsibilities had been assigned.

The Commanding General, Seventh Army, was to coordinate with the Commanding General, SOS NATOUSA, for the assembly of all supplies at various ports and their movement into the combat zone. The task force commander was to be responsible for the supply of all troops assigned and attached to, or in support of his force in the initial phases. The responsibility included the movement of all supplies from ship or craft over the beaches or through such ports as were available until, on order of the Force Commander, Beach Group Control Headquarters assumed the mission on behalf of the Army. It was contemplated that the Commanding General, Base Section, would assume these responsibilities upon the arrival of the first convoy in a major port, about five days after capture of such a port. For the first 60 days supplies were to be forwarded by SOS NATOUSA, and thereafter as requested by Base Section.

The plan specified that SOS NATOUSA would assist in the movement of troops, baggage, equipment, and vehicles to ports; stow in accordance with the wishes of the sub-task force commander; and load out. The transport quartermaster would supervise stowage in conformity to Army wishes and direct debarkation. For coordination of operations, Near Shore Control Groups were established by Colonel Harvey, A. C. of S., G-4, in each of the loading-out ports to carry out the Force Commander's orders until completion of the movement.

Planning for maintenance of the operation proceeded on a phased outline, published 15 April, which constituted the guide to which the variable factors of strength in personnel, vehicles, and weapons, and availability of shipping were applied. Phased maintenance plans

specified quantities of supplies and materials to be brought ashore as individual reserve, beach or unit reserve in the first 30 days in six convoy periods of five days each, and levels to be built up gradually and maintained. Each convoy was to bring in supplies above the calculated daily consumption rates with the result that in practically all classes of supply there would be developed a 20-day reserve in Army depots plus a ten-day operating level pending establishment of bases for stockage of theater reserves. The build-up of ammunition was to be to the theater level of ten units of fire with the unloading of the D plus 50 convoy.

Some Changes Necessary

Soundness of the planning in preparation of the phased maintenance outline was demonstrated in the relatively few changes that were necessary although the tactical plan had varied from a one-division to a three-division assault. Reduction in the shipping allocation, however, dictated a change in late June affecting the ration and gasoline receipts during the first five days ashore. Experience in other amphibious operations within the theater dictated the necessity of planning for conditions in which the inland advance would be slow. A 20 percent reduction, therefore, was ordered in the gasoline lift for the D to D plus four period; and the unit reserve of rations for the same period was reduced from ten to seven, with three added to the second ten-day period. Phased maintenance provided for the assault convoy to lift seven days' supply of motor fuel and lubricants, based on a daily consumption expectancy of six gallons per wheeled vehicle, 30 gallons per halftrack, and 60 gallons per tank, with proportionate amounts of engine oil and greases.

Revised tactical plans in June calling for a faster build-up of troops in the D to D plus four period and an assault by three instead of two divisions necessitated alteration of phased requisitions. But by 6 July the A. C. of S., G-4, was able to report that all requirements for the D to D plus 30 period had been incorporated in phased requisitions. Changes were made to reflect arrival on the far shore in the initial five-day period of a French Corps Headquarters with an armored division and a provisional airborne division, together with the three assaulting

divisions. The troop list totalled 170,115 personnel and 25,191 vehicles. Subsequent alterations corrected the totals to 155,419 personnel and 20,031 vehicles in the 30 July troop list. The build-up would put 366,833 personnel and 56,051 vehicles on the far shore by D plus 30 and 576,833 personnel and 91,341 vehicles by D plus 65.

For support of this force supply services had phased requisitions to put 277,696 tons over the beaches in the first 30 days, of which 188,339 tons were estimated to be cleared and 89,357 tons to accumulate. It was anticipated that 108,206 tons would be moved over Alpha Beach, 74,109 tons over Delta Beach, and 95,380 tons over Camel Beach.

Two Day Aerial Resupply

Formation of the First Airborne Task Force for an operation in conjunction with the seaborne assault required the creation of a resupply system by air commencing D-Day and continuing until junction was effected between the two forces. The airborne force was assembled in the vicinity of Rome; and there a Quartermaster depot supply company, trained in aerial resupply and assigned to Seventh Army, was to lay down seven days' supply. Stocks were to include weapons of all types to replace battle losses, packaged in containers of various types to be dropped from C-47 aircraft on call. It was anticipated that aerial resupply of the force would be required for at least two days.

Fluctuations in the allocation of shipping and craft precluded firm planning until definite decisions were made. Schedules were developed for lifting a three-division assault with a D-Day force of approximately 84,000 personnel and 12,000 vehicles. A follow-up lift to reach the target area by D plus four of one armored division and one combat command would bring in 33,500 additional troops. Only minor modifications of the three-division assault plan were necessary in the final allocating of shipping.

Limited availability of shipping prohibited the necessary vehicle lift by assault craft alone. Consequently, the required lift was obtained by flatting Merchant Transport stores ships with cargo and stowing of maintenance stores above the flatting to the extent permitted

after accommodations of critical vehicles and personnel. Ships thus preloaded were distributed within the task force in conformity with the tactical plan. Cargo was limited to approximately 1,000 tons per ship, a volume which could be discharged within a five-day period and prior to arrival of the succeeding convoy.

One hundred preloaded M/T stores ships were used in the assault and immediate follow-up convoys. The remainder of the shipping maintenance plan was based on receipt of 25 M/T stores ships each five days.

For control of the supply function peculiar to an amphibious operation, the movement of equipment and supplies from ships offshore to army dumps on the beaches, the Beach Control Group method was followed in planning. Control of beach operations by Engineer beach groups would be under the sub-task force commander during the assault phase, after which it would pass to the Army. Coordination was to be accomplished by a Beach Control Group Headquarters, functioning under the Army A. C. of S., G-4, and employing the beach engineer groups which would come ashore with each assault division. It would be the operating agency needed on the beaches with personnel trained in shore operations, unloading methods, traffic control, maintenance of craft and vehicles peculiar to amphibious operations, and logistics.

With the target date less than a month away, the provision of French troops constituted a problem in the final planning phase.

French Supply Problems

Little was known initially of the French supply status or readiness for combat, and French commanders had not been briefed for the operation. Discussion with them and their supply agencies had been forbidden until late in July. Though French planning personnel was available on 22 March, complete liaison was not secured until 1 July. Lower echelons of the French elements lacked information on *ANVIL* and needed orientation on the American supply system and nomenclature. Language differences were a difficulty.

Inspections disclosed that the French were very short of supply, on the basis of their tables of equipment. On 21 July only 30 of 133 units had more than 30 percent of their authorized equipment. According to our standards, the French were not ready for combat. Except for Medical and Ordnance, however, the French considered themselves capable of providing their own support. When on 8 July Seventh Army was delegated authority to exercise normal functions of command to deal directly with French Army B on training and equipment, the resources of the Force supply services were devoted to preparing those units for participation in the operation. The French were to be equipped from stocks of supplies available to the French army through the Joint Rearmament Committee. Deficiencies would be made up from American stocks by SOS NATOUSA and charged to the French Lend-Lease account.

As the target date approached, all units were inspected for serviceability of equipment. Final shortages were filled. Loading plans were completed down to the detail of each person and each vehicle and weapon. In ports on two continents and on the island of Corsica representatives of the A. C. of S., G-4, remained to coordinate between Base Section and departing units, set priorities, assist in filling shortages, and forward emergency supplies.

Brigadier General Paul B. Kelly, Seventh Army Antiaircraft Officer, commanded the Near Shore Control Headquarters upon which responsibility for administration devolved once the Army Headquarters had embarked upon the invasion. General Kelly's headquarters was set up in down-town Naples and had the responsibility for seeing to it that post-D-Day troops and supplies were shipped in accordance with the master plan.

It was estimated that Toulon, the first port to be developed, would fall by D plus 15, would be operational by D plus 20, and would be established sufficiently as a supply base ready to function by D plus 25. The D plus 20 convoy would unload at Toulon, which would be developed ultimately to handle 10,000 tons of military supplies daily. Unloading over the beaches would be necessary for at least 20 days;

Marseille, it was estimated, would not fall prior to D plus 40; no major river crossing would be undertaken prior to D plus 45. These were the assumptions on which plans were based.

The invading force was so composed, the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean estimated, that before the capture of Toulon and with supply only over the beaches it could support itself for exploitation inland to a depth of not more than 20 miles. This was a serious limitation.

Instructions to French Resistance Groups

The planning of *ANVIL* placed no little emphasis on the possible tactical contribution of the French Forces of the Interior. The French Maquis or FFI were scattered over a wide area, but their strength and capacities for guerrilla warfare varied from locality to locality. It was thought that there were about 15,000 to 20,000 trained and armed members of the FFI with perhaps 30,000 to 40,000 more mobilized but unarmed. Two areas in particular, that between Aix-en-Provence and the Rhone River and that east of Grenoble in the high Alps, were considered to be virtually under the control of French Resistance Groups.

Maintenance of contact with the FFI, both by radio and flow of agents, had reached a high state of development and had long since proven an excellent source of intelligence regarding the target area. Most dealings with the FFI were conducted on the AFHQ level. Obviously the proper and skillful handling of the FFI potential, both before and after the invasion, was a matter of the utmost importance. The basic consideration adopted was that the action of the resistance forces must afford the maximum support to Allied operations on the continent. There was no time for romantic or sentimental gestures.

General Cochet, appointed by General De Gaulle as commander of the FFI for Operation *ANVIL*, submitted his plan to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, for approval. By means of Special Projects Operation Center under G-3, AFHQ, a list of priority targets to be attacked on and after D-Day was submitted to the

FFI late in July. The FFI were to intensify their activities in the rear of those enemy forces directly opposing *ANVIL*, with special emphasis on destruction of bridges, cutting and blocking roads and railroads, and seizing or controlling telephone and telegraph lines.

Command channels for the FFI were to be directly under the Commanding General of the Seventh Army and were to be entirely independent and apart from French Army B. General Cochet was to land with the assault force in order to take over active command on French soil as soon as possible. On 8 August, however, General De Gaulle advised that in view of transmitting orders and instructions to the FFI during the early phases of the operation it would be preferable for General Cochet to remain in Algiers which was the communications center for the French Underground. General Cochet was thus replaced by Colonel Boutand de Lavilleon as the official representative on FFI and Civil Affairs matters.

Finally, a Special Operations Group was charged with assisting the French Resistance Groups by delivering troops and supplies in areas held by the FFI. The Maquis, under this coordinated plan, would be able to render the maximum assistance to the overall military effort.

Civil Affairs

Seeking the maximum cooperation from the French civilian population and a minimum of interference with operations against the enemy, the Commanding General of Force 163 had indicated on 1 March 1944 that a Civil Affairs detachment of 200 officers and 400 enlisted men would be necessary to administer efficiently the area assigned to *ANVIL*. A civil affairs organization had been created previously and had trained near Algiers. Every effort was made to coordinate the work with the parallel organization in the United Kingdom which was preparing to administer northwestern Europe. But until 23 February no formal relationship existed between the detachment and Force 163.

The main objective of the contemplated Civil Affairs program was to relieve combat troops of such civilian administration as they might otherwise be called on to perform. The program envisaged cooperation with the appropriate staff section or military agency in the

maintenance of public order and the restoration of the health, welfare, and internal economy of the liberated regions. The Civil Affairs detachment was charged with making available for military use all local resources and man power necessary to support the operation.

The responsibility for Civil Affairs remained, of course, with the Commanding General, but this direction was exercised through the senior Civil Affairs Officer, Colonel Gerry, who, on 24 July, received his new title as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5. Personnel of the Civil Affairs Regiment was largely American and British. French Officers were available to handle most of the liaison work with the French local government authorities. This was particularly true with regard to directing the functions of services needed for military operations.

In addition to the administrative sections there were a number of specialist branches such as civilian supply, public health, welfare, finance, refugee control, a legal department, transportation, price control, property control, monuments, fine arts, education, industry, commerce, utilities, and communications. Each specialist branch operated under a chief who might serve as a specialist staff officer with Army Headquarters. Detachment personnel were to be assigned specific territorial or functional responsibilities or might be attached for supplementary use to operational military units to meet special problems or be assigned to rear area duties. Of necessity plans for civil affairs personnel had to be kept flexible and closely integrated with the tactical situation.

Probably the most important aspect of the anticipated Civil Affairs program was that of civilian food and medical supply. The situation in southern France was understood to be critical; and it was planned to bring in three Liberty ships per convoy from D plus 10 until D plus 40 and thereafter four ships per convoy until D plus 80. All shipments were to come direct from the United States except edible oils which had been stock-piled in North Africa. Distribution was to be made by the French local authorities under the supervision of Civil Affairs Officers. In its largest aspect the function of G-5 "was to assist in furthering the national policies of the United States and the United Nations as determined by higher directives."

CHAPTER IV

Training

SINCE no units were assigned to the Seventh Army until the middle of June, 1944, — some service units did not, as a matter of fact, come under Seventh Army control until just prior to loading the assault ships, — the time available for training in preparation for the Southern France invasion was very limited. There was, however, sufficient time for the principal combat elements of each of the three American sub-task forces to undergo a three weeks refresher course in amphibious assault. The 36th and 45th received their instruction at the Invasion Training Center at Salerno, Italy. The 3rd Division went to Pozzuoli, Italy, where it underwent amphibious training under its own Division Commander.

The training program was adequate because most of the divisions, both American and French, as well as the service units, had had combat experience. The 3rd United States Infantry Division had participated in the Moroccan, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns. The 45th United States Infantry Division got its first battle experience in the Sicilian campaign. The 36th United States Infantry Division made the initial landing at Salerno in the Italian campaign and fought along with the 3rd and 45th in the breakthrough at Anzio and in the subsequent advance through Rome northward toward the Pisa-Rimini Line.

Of the immediate follow-up forces the 1st French Infantry Division and the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division had been in the line during the winter months of the Italian campaign and had taken an important part in the May breakthrough. They had then struck forward from the Cassino area to a position north of Sienna, an advance of some 190 miles. The French 9th Colonial Infantry Division, also part of the follow-up forces, had made an amphibious assault against the island of

Elba and had overcome stubborn resistance in capturing the German garrison. The other French units had undergone a period of approximately twelve months' training in North Africa.

The service units of the newly reconstituted Seventh Army were, to a great extent, those which had worked with the divisions mentioned above in the African, Sicilian, and Italian campaign. Their training placed special emphasis on the organization of various service troops into three Shore Groups to operate the beaches in the three division assault areas until this function could be taken over by the Base Section. Using three experienced engineer regiments as miniature base sections and adding components of all branches of service and supply troops, the command trained these groups as teams.

Naval and Air Force units of the Mediterranean Theater had been actively engaging the enemy since the beginning of the invasion of North Africa. This action included participation in amphibious landings in North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, and Anzio. The Naval Western Task Force organized the convoys to transport the Seventh Army and trained special groups to assist in the assault and to direct naval gun fire support. The Mediterranean Allied Air Force organized and prepared the airborne task force and regrouped air strength to assist the assault.

Establishment of Training Schools

The initial success and rapid advance of the invasion of southern France can be attributed, in part, to careful and thorough amphibious training. Training was designed to prepare the forces for the actual problems of landing. The program's mission was to acquaint them with the use and care of new equipment and techniques, to coordinate the maximum usefulness of the several arms of the service, and to review the best practices of modern warfare. Every effort was made to achieve realism.

As early as 13 March 1944, the Commanding General of Force 163 recommended the creation for a joint Army-Navy Beach Obstacle Board, composed of one member from the Invasion Training Center,

two from the Navy, and three from Seventh Army Headquarters. The mission of the Board, which included Captain John Chamber, Seventh Army Engineer Section, was to investigate possible means of breaching underwater and beach obstacles, to make recommendations to corps and division commanders, and to assist in the procurement of the necessary demolitions and equipment to perform this work as efficiently as possible. A detailed study was made of Beach 264-A (St. Raphael) as a basis of training. Beach 264-A had previously been recommended by General Davidson and approved by General Patch as one possible site for an initial landing. Furthermore, this beach was considered one of the most heavily defended in the target area.

On 20 and 21 June a demonstration of equipment and techniques was conducted at Salerno. The Air Corps showed the results of hitting beach defenses with showers of small-sized aerial bombs, specially designed with fuses on sticks attached to the nose of the bomb. These bombs exploded several feet above the ground, effectively cutting wire obstacles and detonating mines. The Navy shelled beach defenses with heavy guns and sent in Apex boats, Drone boats, Reddy Foxes, and Rocket ships. The Apex boat is a small radio-controlled craft which tows, at an angle, two Drone boats. The latter are small craft filled with explosives to be detonated from the control radio of the Apex boat. Reddy Foxes are a nautical adaption of the Bangalore torpedo, consisting of a section of pipe filled with explosives floated into position over underwater obstacles, sunk, and then detonated by remote control. Rocket ships are LCTs equipped with launchers for up to 1,000 rockets, to be fired in mass at beach defenses by the crew.

Army gapping teams demonstrated the tank 'dozer-scarifier, a medium tank equipped with plow-type bulldozer blade for rooting up mines and beach obstacles. In addition there was the Churchill tank with bridge, a tank topped with a box-girder bridge ramp which might be lowered to transform the tank into the center pier of a bridge to cross antitank ditches. There were also other demonstrations with breaching charges and the T-40 rocket launcher. After each, an appraisal was made of the limitations and capabilities of the various weapons exhibited.

In the actual course of Operation *DRAGOON*, all of the above items were used with the exception of Reddy Foxes, which though available, proved unnecessary. Their "combined efforts", it was later noted, "added to the softening process of the pre-H-Hour bombing and made the assault landing easier."

Invasion Training Center

The Invasion Training Center, commanded by Brigadier General Henry C. Wolfe, was moved from Port-aux-Poules, Algeria, to Salerno, Italy, during the spring of 1944. In compliance with an order from Allied Force Headquarters the Invasion Training Center established a school for one week's instruction in water-proofing, principally for officers from Mediterranean and Northern base sections from which *ANVIL* units were to be mounted. At the completion of the course these officers returned to their sections to conduct schools for the instruction of officers and key NCOs in Seventh Army service units. Representatives of units within Peninsular Base Section (Italy) and personnel of all divisions during their stay at the center attended the water-proofing school itself. For troops scheduled to arrive in the assault area after D-Day, weather-proofing rather than water-proofing instruction was given.

On 10 June 1944 control of the Invasion Training Center was transferred from Allied Force Headquarters to Seventh Army for closer supervision of final aspects of amphibious training. Upon release from the Fifth Army, it was originally planned that divisions comprising VI Corps were to be given training in accordance with the recommendations of the Army-Navy Beach Obstacles Board on the following schedule: 45th Division, 24 June to 14 July; 3rd Division, 28 June to 14 July; and 36th Division, 6 July to 30 July. This schedule was later modified because both the 45th Division and the 36th Division arrived in the vicinity of Salerno during the latter part of June and received training simultaneously during the first weeks of July. The 3rd Division, as aforesaid, did not train at Salerno but conducted its own school at Pozzuoli with the advice and assistance of the 1st Naval Beach Battalion

from the Invasion Training Center. Since the division had been trained for three previous invasions, North Africa, Sicily, and Anzio, the training program during the month of July at Pozzuoli was more or less a general review of amphibious techniques with the introduction and demonstration of new weapons and equipment.

The Salerno site was well selected. The memory of former experiences on this terrain created an atmosphere of grim realism and a thorough appreciation of the necessity for proper preparation. "Quite



36TH DIVISION TROOPS DEBARK 'UNDER FIRE'

"... from the lessons previously learned there had been hardly time to forget . . ."

a contrast then and now!" wrote a member of the 171st Field Artillery Battalion. "The same beaches, the same hills, the same dust and sand; but conditions have altered the situation and, though we almost expected the whine of shells and the roar of German planes, we found a refreshing, reassuring stillness, serene and peaceful."

The proximity of the sea was ideal for practice in loading and unloading vehicles and personnel, beach assault exercises, and swimming both for training and recreation. The nearby mountains were excellent for instruction in patrolling, wire and radio, map and compass; they were also used for hikes and general physical conditioning. Ranges were available for firing all types of weapons. Rubber models of terrain features, along with sand and clay tables, helped to make vivid the assault objectives. Combat spirit and infantry tactics were emphasized in order to weld replacements into a fighting team.

Infantry Training

The nine infantry regiments composing the 3rd, 36th and 45th Divisions were given a brief review of regular infantry warfare and specialized training in demolitions and amphibious assault. Their training period also served to refit and restore equipment lost or worn out during the Italian campaign, and to receive and absorb replacements. As much rest and recreation as could be fitted into the brief period was allowed. To soldiers long in combat this was an outstanding feature of the period.

The general schedule for demolition training consisted of a 90 minute lecture by officers preceding demonstrations by engineer troops which covered the general field of military explosives. This course introduced the types and nature of American and British explosives, fuses (safety and instantaneous), the handling of caps, the preparation of charges, the use of primacord, the nature and fusing of Bangalore torpedoes, the preparation of pole and satchel charges, and the application and effect of shaped charges. This phase was followed by another 90 minute period of practice work; under the supervision of the Engineers each soldier prepared a charge.

After basic principles of handling explosives the program continued with a lecture and demonstration of underwater obstacles, beach obstacles, and the neutralization of obstacle-defended beaches. Work was also done on special demolition charges and special equipment to be used with armor. Practical demonstrations were given in the destruction

of tetrahedrons, dragon's teeth, pillboxes with doors of wood or steel, German wire obstacles, double-apron barbed wire fences, and concertinas. Experiments were carried out with placed charges to breach antitank walls, destroy concrete cubes, or horned scullies, and to fill antitank ditches.

The men already had a grim familiarity with the use of mines in modern warfare. Problems involving both Allied and Axis antitank and antipersonnel mines, mine field patterns, marking of mine fields, methods of neutralizing mines, use of various types of mine detectors, probing and mine lifting methods employed their old experience on a more detailed level.

Boat teams were given assault training, demonstrations and "dry runs", critiques of "lessons learned". Special attention was paid to the clearance of both underwater and beach obstacles. The methods recommended by the Joint Army-Navy Beach Obstacle Board were introduced: eight-man DUKW teams from the engineers were to be used to widen and to mark gaps through underwater obstacles. Infantry boat teams which were to land in the first wave were taught to destroy beach obstacles with wire cutters, pole charges, and Bangalore torpedoes, and to assault pillboxes with demolitions and flame throwers.

In addition to specialized training, the infantry schedule included 25 mile marches, close order drill and calisthenics, extended order drill, orientation, bayonet and rifle drill, chemical warfare training, security lectures, semaphore signaling, terrain study, and sketching. Inspections were made of gas masks, weapons, equipment, identification tags, and pay books. While the troops were being trained, their equipment was brought up to standard.

Artillery Training

The artillery units of the 45th and 36th Divisions received training at the Invasion Training Center between 1 and 17 July. This training consisted primarily of the use of artillery weapons under amphibious conditions and involved the loading and unloading of 105 mm howitzers from DUKWs, firing from DUKWs both on land and

on water, and the use of A-frames in unloading howitzers. Other phases included the firing of small arms and machine guns at aerial-towed targets, reconnaissance, and occupation of positions. Classes were held



THE LATEST DUKW IN THE FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL

"... new techniques were introduced and old ones reviewed . . ."

in security, communications, surveying, photo-interpretation, map reading, swimming, and physical conditioning.

In order to direct naval fire on particular objects that might hinder the infantry's advance before the field artillery units were in action, Naval Shore Fire Control parties were organized and trained to accompany infantry battalions. On 27 July, 19 Field Artillery lieutenants and 144 enlisted men were attached to the units of Seventh Army.

Officers and enlisted men had been drawn from a replacement depot. Under the supervision of the Seventh Army Artillery Section their training had taken place since early spring in the vicinity of Arzew,

Algeria, with the United States Navy, and at Salerno with the Invasion Training Center. Eighteen parties were organized from this personnel; and twelve additional parties were formed from divisional artillery of the 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions. A complete party of the Army Section consisted of one Field Artillery lieutenant, five enlisted men, one one-quarter ton truck, and two radios, and the Navy Section of one Naval Officer, four enlisted men, one one-quarter ton truck, one one-quarter ton trailer, and two radios. A "half party" was made up of the Army Section only. Each division had attached eight full parties and one half party; the 1st Special Service Force had three full and one half parties.

The parties were attached one to each assault battalion and by means of radio communication could bring naval fire on any point at the request of the battalion commander.

Tank Battalion Training

Personnel of tank battalions assigned to the divisions received a three weeks' course in the adaptation of tanks for use in amphibious operations. By means of the Duplex Drive device a regular medium tank was converted into an amphibious tank and special instruction was necessary to train crews to operate this equipment. For the safety of the crews it was also necessary to equip each man with the Momson Lung and teach him its proper use.

The Duplex Drive device is a system of flotation for a medium tank which consists of a canvas screen fastened to the lower hull. When it is raised and held in position by mechanical means, the tank will float. Propulsion is obtained by propellers driven from standard truck differentials mounted on the sprocket hub. Power is transmitted to the marine screws in the rear through drive shafts mounted on the side of the tank. The Momson Lung, a device used by submarine crews to escape from sunken craft, was issued to each member of the tank crew so that escape would be possible in case of damage to the flotation apparatus.

The regular tank training problems proved more difficult than the arrangements for experimentation and practice with new devices. Efforts to secure adequate ranges for the firing of tank weapons, for example, were unsuccessful. The Shermans went into combat without ever having fired a round of 105 mm direct fire at a target.

For training with the Momson Lung a large industrial reservoir at Battipaglia, Italy, approximately 100 yards long, 50 yards wide, and 15 feet deep, was prepared by the 40th Engineer Regiment. Tankmen practiced descending into deep water. At one end of the reservoir two compartments were constructed and a tank chassis lowered into one. The crews with their Momson Lung equipment then took their normal positions in the chassis with the turret closed. Then by means of a water gate the compartment was suddenly flooded from the main reservoir; and the tankmen quickly adjusted their equipment, opened the turret, and escaped to the surface. After this operation, water was pumped from the first compartment to the second, and the training process repeated.

On the Salerno training beaches the DD amphibious tank crews were first familiarized with the handling of DUKWs in the sea. They learned the effect of waves and the wake of other vessels on DUKWs, as well as problems of landing on beaches, and became accustomed to handling of vehicle-vessels in the water. They drove DD tanks from shore into the sea, maneuvered in the waves, and then landed. This was followed by practice in launching DD tanks from LSTs several hundred yards from shore and landing the tanks on beaches. Launching was carried out in different depths of water and at various distance from the shore. Care was taken to point out to crews the vulnerability of DD tanks to mines and underwater obstacles. They were taught not to approach beaches until paths had been cleared and marked through the underwater obstacles.

Engineer Beach Group Training

Combat engineer outfits went through particularly rigorous and thorough training because of their key role in dealing with enemy defenses. They were to clear the way for the infantry's advance and

establish initial supply dumps and depots. Attached to each division there was to be an engineer regiment reorganized into a Beach Group.

The vital problem of coordinating Army and Navy action in moving troops and supplies over the invasion beaches had resulted in appointment of a Beach Control Board early in March. This board, which included Captain English of the Navy and Colonel Edwin C. Eller, Seventh Army Engineer Section, had as its mission the recommendation of a standard operating procedure for unloading of supply ships. In middle March Colonel Eller, the Beach Group Commander, established a Beach Group Control Headquarters at Ecole Normale. The time had now come to transmit these plans to those who would carry them out in combat.

The 36th Engineer Beach Group with the 3rd Division was composed of the 36th Engineer Combat Regiment with attached 1st Naval Beach Battalion, and six companies and ten platoons from various chemical, ordnance, signal, military police, and other service troops. The 540th Engineer Beach Group with the 36th Division was composed of the Engineer regiment and the 48th Engineer Battalion, the 8th Naval Beach Battalion, two Quartermaster battalions, two port battalions, one Medical battalion, and 25 separate companies, platoons, and detachments of assorted service troops. The 40th Engineer Beach Group was with the 45th Division. This included the 4th Naval Beach Battalion, two Quartermaster battalions, two port battalions, one Medical battalion, and over 40 smaller units. The composition of these Beach Groups was such that each was a base section in miniature. The chief aim of training was still the practice of engineer assault duties, but the training period was so organized as to give special training to the Beach Group as units.

The mission of Engineer Beach Groups was to assist in the passage of underwater and beach obstacles and to debark over selected beaches troops, vehicles, and supplies of their respective divisions. They were subsequently to establish and maintain the necessary depots of supplies and equipment for the tactical forces. Training centered primarily on the first task, the passage of underwater and beach obstacles.

Of the Beach Group personnel only the Engineers, a small detail from the Chemical Warfare troops, and the Naval Beach Battalions were to participate in the initial landing. Their technical training program included extensive practice problems in demolition work; the scale was much more thorough than that given the infantry troops. The teams experimented with types of placed charges against all kinds of obstacles especially types known to be on the beaches of southern France. Underwater obstacles, beach obstacles, antitank walls and ditches were constructed and then destroyed by demolitions. Army and Navy personnel, all battle-tested men able to swim, were organized into special gapping teams.

As the selected beaches were known to be mined, emphasis was placed on mine warfare. Engineers were trained to operate the tank-'dozer and tank-scarifier, and to use rockets from launchers on M-4 tanks. Mine field detection and clearance were reviewed, especially the use of various types of mine detectors, primacord nets, and Bangalore torpedoes. Special teams were trained to lay Sommerfelt matting to expedite the movement of vehicles across sand, and others to operate tanks equipped with a boxgirder bridge for crossing antitank ditches.

One snag was the impracticability of the new type mine detector. It was too heavy and far too sensitive. Engineers reported that the detector "picked up air pockets, roots, wood, stone, and small particles of iron and metal as well as box mines."

"The majority of engineer units of the new Seventh Army," General Davidson explained in his Engineer Historical Report, "were veterans of previous amphibious operations and had experienced many months in combat. Therefore, as the time was short, their training was limited to introduction of new methods and operation of new equipment. Instead of being trained themselves, engineer troops were used primarily to instruct the infantry, artillery, and like branches in demolitions, mine warfare, and the passage of obstacles"

All service troops received training in the use of their authorized weapons, in water-proofing and de-water-proofing vehicles, and in loading and unloading procedures. They attended lectures on

gas warfare, security, sanitation, orientation, map reading, and special subjects according to their respective duties. A physical conditioning program which included road marches, swimming, and calisthenics was followed by all troops.

Medical units practiced driving ambulances over an obstacle course, carrying litters under simulated combat conditions, and training with DUKWs for evacuation of wounded from beach to ship. Military Police were instructed in the procedure of handling beach traffic and evacuation of prisoners of war.

Chemical Warfare units carried out a three-day training program in the operation and refilling of flame-throwers. They also assisted in the instruction of all troops of Seventh Army in defense against chemical warfare. Signal Corps troops practiced active message center operations under amphibious and beach conditions. Ordnance troops gave water-proofing instruction and studied the problem of setting up depots and repair and maintenance shops immediately following the landing. Quartermaster supply and transportation units practiced unloading operations and the establishment of initial supply dumps.

All this training was supervised and regulated by the Beach Group Commanders. Almost all the service troops had had campaign experience with the divisions to which they were attached. It was "organization" rather than "training" which was stressed.

Combined Landing Exercises

When the amphibious training schedule had been completed, two of the three divisions moved from the Salerno area to new bivouac areas north of Naples. Physical conditioning and regular combat training continued and equipment was brought up to standard. As much recreation as possible was allowed.

Under the direction of VI Corps, each division participated in a realistic "dry run" assault on a division scale, with naval and air support, simulating as closely as possible with conditions expected in southern France. On 31 July the 3rd Division rehearsal, known as

SHAMROCK, took place on the beach between Mondragone and Formia on the Bay of Gaeta. A week later the 36th Division landing exercise with full naval complement of ships was held in the same bay on the



A BANGALORE TORPEDO BLOWS OUT A BARBED WIRE BARRICADE

"... full-scale practice assaults stressed combat realism . . ."

beaches near the mouth of the Garigliano River. This operation was known as **COWPUNCHER II**. Simultaneously the **THUNDERBIRD** operation by the 45th Division was taking place to the south on the Bay of Salerno. Since all these exercises were similar in nature, the 45th's will serve to illustrate their general scope.

The plan for **THUNDERBIRD** envisioned that at H-Hour on D-Day simultaneous daylight amphibious assaults were to be made employing three divisions abreast. After the beachhead was secure, an advance was to be made rapidly inland to contact an airborne division. The beachhead was to be expanded in order to seize high ground and airfield sites and to protect the right flank of the assault. Seizing the

"town" with a mobile striking force, troops would advance to the northwest. Throughout the operation contact was to be maintained with friendly troops to the west.

Everything was done to make the exercise simulate exact conditions of the coming invasion. On 5 August a field order arrived from the division headquarters for the exercise. Sealed overlays and maps were put aboard the ships. Embarkation took place in and near Naples from the same points which were later used in the departure for France.

The parallel was made as realistic as possible by the construction of the types of obstacles to be expected on the beaches of southern France. By the use of live ammunition, white phosphorous shells, mines with a reduced charge, naval gunfire, the laying of smoke screens and the firing of rockets at the beach from landing craft, battle conditions were made dramatic and instructive. Beach groups put in place floating piers, employed Bangalore torpedoes, laid landing mats and unloaded 105 mm howitzers from DUKWs. Demolition and mine clearance squads breached antitank obstacles and cleared mine fields. The smallest detail was handled with the same care that troops were expected to exercise on D-Day.

Airborne Training

The training program of the airborne troops, whose role Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, Commanding General of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force, called one of "great historical importance", had one aim: "to mechanize each man in his job so as to insure that he would carry out his mission under the most difficult circumstances." Because the 1st Airborne Task Force was made up of units which prior to 15 July 1944 had operated entirely as separate forces, it was necessary to organize these independent elements into a tactical organization under combat team commanders. Major General Robert T. Frederick, who formerly commanded the American-Canadian Special Service Force, was placed in command of the 1st Airborne Task Force and immediately

undertook the problems of organizing and training this newly activated unit.

A school for glider training was established near Rome. Between 20 July and 5 August nine ground units from artillery, chemical, infantry, engineer, signal, medical, and ordnance branches completed the course. The training team was provided by the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion; and instruction included the loading and lashing of equipment, two operational flights, and basic training in the technique of assembly after landing under simulated battle conditions. It was not an easy task to convert ground force troops into gliderborne units within the short time available. However, the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion instructional team had previously conducted glider training in the States; and their work was successfully accomplished.

The rehearsal training for the Airborne Task Force was divided into two phases, ground and air. The first consisted of a ground operation on terrain carefully selected to resemble the terrain which each combat team would occupy upon arrival in southern France. A schedule was prepared in keeping with the time schedule of the operation itself. All communication personnel of each combat team, with all their equipment, were engaged in this ground instruction. The air phase consisted of the actual loading and unloading of all personnel and equipment in accordance with the time schedule. Key personnel were flown in transports and in gliders over a route comparable to that of the operation itself. Rehearsals with air and naval support helped to coordinate the training of the Airborne Task Force with that of the other services.

The Special Service Force Points the Invasion

The spearhead of the invasion, the 1st Special Service Force, which was to assault the cliff-bound islands of Port Cros and Levant, had already had considerable combat experience. Originally organized from carefully selected Canadian and American personnel, it had been given varied forms of combat training, including parachute jumping, demolitions, mountain fighting, and amphibious tactics. This Force had

led the American drive into Kiska in the Aleutians, and had seen action in the Anzio Beachhead action, including the breakthrough and march on Rome.

Beginning about 5 August the Special Service Force was given intensive training under the direction of the Invasion Training Center at Santa Maria del Castelmonte, 75 miles south of Salerno. Naval Beach Marking parties and Naval Shore Fire Control parties were attached to the Force for training.

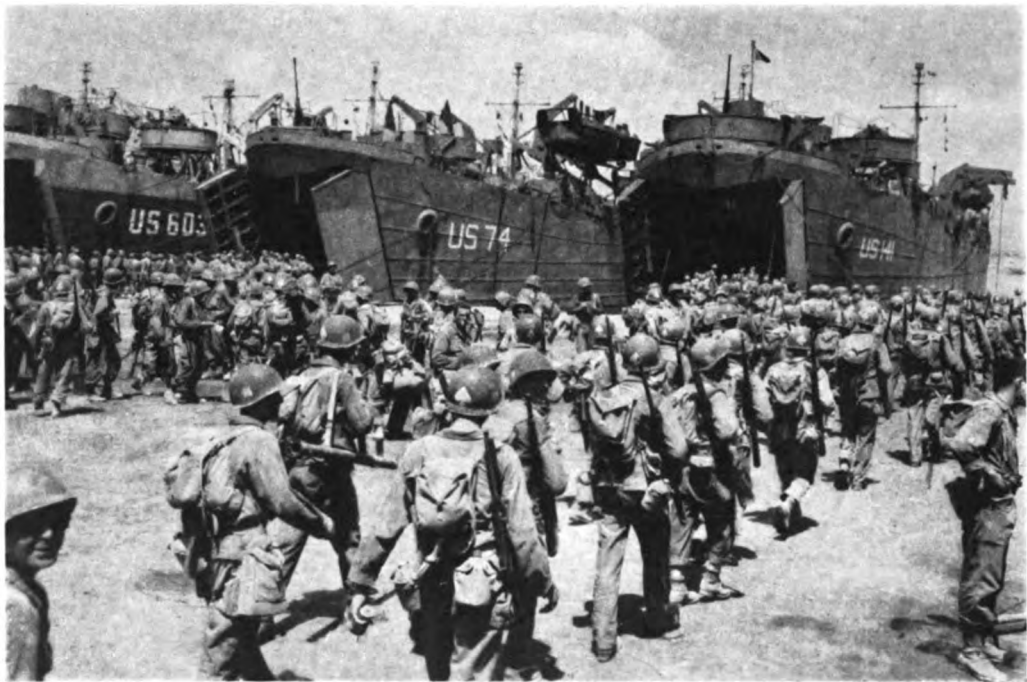
The Invasion Training Center program included organizing boat teams and infantry demolition squads, wire breaching by boat teams, the use of rockets, flame throwers, infantry weapons, the adjustment of individual equipment for debarkation, water-proofing signal equipment and weapons, and handling mines and booby traps. The Navy offered instruction in the care and use of rubber boats. Under joint Army-Navy sponsorship, classes were conducted in loading and unloading from naval vessels (APDs and LCIs), and in approaching precipitous shores with rubber boats. Practice in scaling cliffs was emphasized in day and night landing exercises against beachless shores. After each, critiques were held, and the Training Director made comments and suggestions in order to improve amphibious and other special techniques.

In addition to the Invasion Center program the Special Service Force carried out such activities as swimming instructions for non-swimmers, special methods for swimmers, route marches over hilly terrain, infiltration marches from beaches to inland objectives, compass problems, and a study of aerial photographs of the beaches.

The handling of rubber boats was emphasized in many rehearsals. These were first launched from APDs about 7,000 yards offshore where a flotilla was formed alongside the ship. Each rubber assault craft contained ten men, and as many as ten craft at a time were towed by LCVPIs to a line about 1,000 yards from shore. From that point the boats were paddled to shore and landings made. "Dry runs" against undefended shores were first attempted in daylight and then carried over into night problems. The main objective was the attainment of "complete surprise" and "rapid movement inland". It was assumed that the

enemy would be on the alert for the assault, but would expend his main effort on defending obvious beaches. Beach Special Service Regiment therefore prepared and executed a full scale combat problem covering all phases of training, including assault landing at night on rocky beaches, cliff scaling with full combat load, preparing for counterattack, and landing supplies.

On the night of 7-8 August, in the final practice assault called Operation *BRUNO*, the troops landed on the islands of Ponza and Zannona, off the Italian coast. Terrain features and conditions closely resembled those to be encountered in the coming operation. Sheer cliffs



3RD DIVISION TROOPS IN ITALY LOAD UP FOR A PRACTICE AMPHIBIOUS LANDING

"... seldom has an army moved from combat to training and then into combat again with so little loss of time ..."

extended down to the water's edge; strong winds were creating hazardous surf conditions. The cliffs were scaled, and the enemy was theoretically taken by surprise from the rear. The only difficulty of the

assault occurred when the engines of one of the landing craft broke down, and General Devers had to be "rescued" in a midnight mid-sea transfer by the USS *Greene*.

The French Commandos were given an intensive training program similar to that of the Special Service Force. In an area on the Italian coast near Agropoli they participated in small craft drills and practiced landing on beachless shores. The Navy furnished an APD and LSIs for rehearsals of ship-to-shore assault by teams using rubber boats. The emphasis during the training was on night operations, trying to preserve to the utmost the element of surprise. The final full-scale practice assault took place on the night of 7—8 August on the Italian coast near Mondragone.

Although the period of training for the Seventh Army's invasion of southern France was necessarily brief, it was realistic and effective. New techniques were introduced, and old ones reviewed. Seldom has an army moved from combat to training and then into combat again with so little loss of time. The Seventh Army returned from its final dress rehearsal on 8 August and began loading into transports. In less than a week's time the troops were putting into actual practice the lessons they had learned.

CHAPTER V

Moving to the Assault

AT the conclusion of the joint Army-Navy landing exercises, the three American assault divisions moved directly from their training areas to the Naples area for mounting. The French follow-up forces were to be loaded at Taranto, Corsica, and Oran, but only the Groupe de Commandos and a small French Naval Assault Group were to figure in the D-Day attack. The other French forces were follow-up troops and would not arrive at the target area until D plus one.

The Western Naval Task Force Commander conducted his final briefing for key commanders on 6 August. On 9 August General Lucian K. Truscott, the VI Corps Commander, briefed his staff, with Mr. James V. Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, Admiral Hewitt, the Division Commanders, the Commanders of the Naval Task Forces, General Frederick of the Airborne Task Force, and General Saville of the XII Tactical Air Command present. On 11 August General Patch conducted his final briefing at Seventh Army Headquarters, Naples. Mr. Robert P. Patterson, Assistant Secretary of War, Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell, Army Service Forces Commander, Major General Thomas B. Larkin, and Brigadier General Morris W. Gilland from Services of Supply, North African Theater of Operations, General Saville, and Admiral Hewitt attended.

On the afternoon of 11 August the Chief of Staff and other Seventh Army Headquarters personnel went aboard the USS *Henrico* in the Bay of Naples. Here the Seventh Army set up its Command Post afloat. General Patch and his Assistant Chiefs of Staff, G-2 and G-3 and a few other key Staff Officers comprised the Advanced Seventh Army Headquarters aboard the USS *Catoctin*. So far as Seventh Army was

concerned, the die had been cast and there was little to do aboard ship but watch the tremendous amphibious force gather itself for its long-awaited strike into southern France.

In a message of commendation issued to the officers and enlisted men of Seventh Army Headquarters aboard ship, General Patch said:

I desire at this time to express my appreciation for the painstaking zeal, initiative and high devotion to duty displayed by all officers and men of my staff in formulating the plan for the forthcoming operation

I recognize the patience and perserverance demonstrated by all members of the staff in following through with the planning despite obstacles and delays resulting from factors beyond their control, and upon which the progress of the planning was dependent. I deeply appreciate the constant effort, tireless application, and attention to duty displayed by all in completing the planning phase of the operation.

Numerous Parts Involved

The various elements of Seventh Army were waiting at ports of embarkation in Italy, Corsica, and North Africa. Some units had embarked as early as 15 July. In the Naples—Salerno area were the 3rd Infantry Division, commanded by Major General John W. O'Daniel, the 36th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General John E. Dahlquist, and the 45th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General William W. Eagles, together with the headquarters of VI Corps and Seventh Army. In ports on the "heel" of Italy was the French II Corps, under the command of General de Larminat, consisting of the 1st French Infantry Division, commanded by General Brosset, the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division commanded by General de Goislard de Montsabert, and attached troops. In Corsica were the 1st Special Service Force, commanded by Colonel Edwin A. Walker, and the French Groupe de Commandos, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bouvet, both of which had been moved combat loaded from the Naples area on 11 August. Near Oran, Algeria, were minor elements of the French II Corps, and General Sudre's Combat Command One of the French 1st



Armored Division. Troopships and naval escort vessels waited in the harbors of Pozzuoli, Naples, Salerno, Taranto, Brindisi, Palermo, Malta, Oran, and Ajaccio.

It was logical that the operation should be mounted from Allied-controlled ports nearest the selected assault area of southern France. The island of Corsica lies 100 miles southeast of the assault beaches, but its ports are insufficient to accommodate ships for a major naval operation. The greater portion of the forces forming the initial assault were marshalled near the excellent anchorages, beaches, and restored docks in the Naples area, including the harbor facilities of Cuma, Baia, Pozzuoli, Bagnoli, Nisida, Portici, Castellammare, and Salerno. This area lies some 430 miles southeast of the assault beaches. The approach corridor for the assault would be the stretch of water between the northwestern coast of Corsica and the beaches. For the subsequent build-up, all available Allied-held ports would be used.

Naval convoys which transported the forces were to follow the regularly prescribed routes or channels; these prearranged routes were to be swept of mines and efficient air protection given by regular and coordinated aerial patrols. Deviations for the purpose of deception were to be made from the formal convoy lanes, but in general there were ten arterial routes of communication between the mounting areas and the coast of southern France.

Convoy Routes

Of these ten routes, Route number one from the Naples area was the most important, since it was to be used by the main force of the assault. It proceeded from Naples in a northwesterly direction, passing through the Straits of Bonifacio, which separate the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, and thence followed the western coast of Corsica in a northerly direction until abreast of the middle of the island. Here (42° 04' Latitude, 08° 12' Longitude) the main route was joined by routes from the "heel" of Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and North Africa. This point served as a naval assembly area, from which convoys were to proceed to the invasion beaches.

Route number two originated at the port of Taranto and joined route number four at a point off the southeastern coast of Italy. Route number four came around the "heel" from the port of Brindisi, and the



NAPLES HARBOR PRIOR TO D DAY CROWDED WITH THE MAIN
ASSAULT FORCE

"... there were ten arterial routes of communication between the mounting area and the coast of southern France. Of these, Route No. 1 from the Naples area was the most important . . ."

two routes then passed north of the islands of Malta and Pantelleria to join the Naples route at the assembly point off Corsica.

Two routes originated in the harbor of Oran. One of these, route number three, went eastward along the North African coast, passed Algiers, where additional ships would be acquired, and then continued along the coast for some 200 miles before turning northward to join the Taranto—Brindisi routes at a point off the southwestern coast of Sardinia (39° 15' Latitude, 07° 47' Longitude). The other, route

number five, proceeded northwestward from Oran between the Balearic Islands and Sardinia, thence due north into the region of the assault.

Route number six originated in the port of Palermo, Sicily, and proceeded westward, eventually joining the Oran, Taranto, and Brindisi routes off the southwestern coast of Sardinia. At this same point, route number seven from the southern Sardinian port of Cagliari also joined the other southern routes. Route number eight started in the bay of Ajaccio, Corsica, and passed westward a short distance to join the Naples and southern routes at the naval rendezvous.

Number nine, the shortest route, ran from the harbor of Calvi on the northwestern coast of Corsica directly to the invasion beaches, approximately 105 miles away. The tenth and final route, beginning at Ajaccio, kept to the west of the assault approach corridor and was used by the Special Service Force in its attack on the islands of Levant and Port Cros.

Loading Out

Eight hundred and fifty-three vessels from the combined Allied navies formed the Western Task Force, commanded by Vice Admiral Hewitt. The Task Force included 505 United States ships and craft, 252 British, 19 French, six Greek, and 63 merchant vessels of various nationalities. There were five battleships, four heavy cruisers, 18 light cruisers, nine aircraft carriers, 85 destroyers, 20 large transports, 370 large landing ships and craft, and necessary supply and maintenance vessels. Deck-loaded on this fleet was a miniature navy of 1,267 small landing craft. The fleet was organized into six lesser task forces: one, the Control Force, for naval operations, maintenance, and control; one Aircraft Carrier Force; and four Transport Assault Forces, identified with the military assault teams.

The Control Force, under Admiral Hewitt, comprised 178 vessels, including 43 destroyers, 26 motor torpedo boats, and gunboats, minesweepers, tenders, store ships, oilers, colliers, and repair ships. The USS *Catocin* served as flagship of the force and as command posts for the Army and Corps commanders.

The Aircraft Carrier Force, commanded by Rear Admiral T. H. Troubridge, RN, departed from Malta on 12 August and followed convoy route number two to the assembly area off Corsica. This force consisted of seven carriers of the Royal Navy, the *Khedive*, *Emperor*, *Searcher*, *Pursuer*, *Attacker*, *Stalker*, and *Hunter*, and two from the United States Navy, the *Tulagi* and the *Kassan Bay*. Aboard each ship were 24 fighter aircraft, including Seafires, Hellcats and Wildcats, some equipped to fire rockets. Four antiaircraft cruisers ("flak ships") and 14 destroyers escorted the carriers. The Aircraft Carrier Force, in conjunction with land-based fighters from Corsica, provided air cover for the assembling convoys and later for the landing. On D-Day 150 sorties were flown by carrier-based aircraft.

To accommodate the two pre-D-Day assault forces, a special naval task force of high-speed ships was organized. This was known as the Support (Sitka-Romeo) Force and was commanded by Rear Admiral L. A. Davidson, USN. The naval complement consisted of five transport (APDS) and three medium and two small infantry landing ships, making a total of ten, escorted by the French battleship *Lorraine*, one heavy cruiser, five light cruisers, three destroyers, 16 motor torpedo boats, and 15 small craft. The Sitka Force (First Special Service Force) included 2,057 troops, and the Romeo Force (French Commandos) was approximately 1,000 strong. The former had come from Santa Maria de Castelabate and the latter from Agropoli, both in Italy. On 11 August they both transferred to Propriano near Ajaccio, Corsica. Here they remained for two days, cleaned equipment, and were briefed with the most recent intelligence concerning their objectives.

To transport the three assault divisions the Western Task Force originally allocated 60 six-davit LSTs, to be distributed on a basis of 20 to each division. The divisions planned to lift four assault battalions apiece. Subsequently, however, the number of six-davit LSTs was reduced to 50. This necessitated a major change in the plan for lifting the assault battalions, and by command decision the 50 LSTs were re-allocated as follows: 20 for the 3rd Infantry Division, 15 for the 45th Infantry Division, and 15 for the 36th Infantry Division.

The 3rd Infantry Division was the basic element of Alpha Force, which was carried and supported by Naval Task Force No. 84, under the command of Rear Admiral F. J. Lowry, USN. This force was mounted during the second week in August from the Pozzuoli-Nisida-Naples area and was allocated 122 troopships. Three battalions were loaded on the 20 six-davit LSTs, three battalions in combat loaders, and three battalions in LCIs. The division strength, including the 36th Engineer Beach Group and attached units, amounted to 28,756 men and 3,636 vehicles. In the same convoy were 5,114 men and 907 vehicles of Seventh Army and the Air Corps loaded in ten additional transports. The build-up of Air Corps equipment and personnel continued from Corsica for some time after D-Day by means of a special LST shuttle system.

The French forces scheduled to land in the Alpha area beginning on D plus one had already mounted farther south and were proceeding to the convoy assembly point off Corsica. From the "heel" of Italy the French II Corps, 1st French Infantry Division, and 3rd Algerian Infantry Division, with attached service units, a total of over 34,000 individuals and 4,951 vehicles, moved on 50 large transports. At the same time 11 motor transports with 6,852 additional troops and 1,258 vehicles of French II Corps were enroute from Oran. The Naval escort of the Alpha Force came from Malta and included the British battleship *Ramillies*, the heavy cruiser USS *Quincy*, five light cruisers, six destroyers, and 13 smaller craft, bringing the grand total of the Force to 207 vessels, carrying 74,500 soldiers and 10,752 vehicles.

The Delta Attack Force, supported by Naval Task Force No. 85, commanded by Rear Admiral B. J. Rodgers, USN, was much smaller than the Alpha Force and was mounted simultaneously with Camel Force at the Pozzuoli-Nisida and main Naples staging areas. Army personnel included the 45th Infantry Division, the 40th Engineer Beach Group, and attached assault elements, totalling 36,654 men and 5,359 vehicles. Twenty-four large transports and 106 landing ships and craft were necessary to accommodate the force. Three of nine combat battalions of the 45th Division were loaded on the 15 six-davit LSTs, three on combat loaders, and three on LCIs. Two battleships, the USS *Texas*

and USS *Nevada*, three light cruisers, 11 destroyers, and some 43 small craft from the base at Taranto formed the Delta naval escort, bringing the ~~convoy~~ to a total of 189 vessels.

Naval Task Force No. 87, commanded by Rear Admiral Lewis, USN, transported the Camel Assault Force from Italy and Combat Command Sudre of the French 1st Armored Division from Africa. In the Naples area the 36th Division, the 540th Engineer Beach Group, and attached troops, 31,355 men and 4,313 vehicles, were loaded between 10 and 12 August on 20 transports and 91 landing ships and craft. The nine combat battalions of the 36th Division were loaded in the same manner as those of the 45th Division, but special arrangements had to be made for the loading of vehicles. This was necessary because an H-Hour assault over the heavily defended Camel Red Beach (264-A) presented too great a risk, and the first LST and LCI landings were to be made on the nearby Agay Beaches. Red Beach was to be attacked by ground forces first and by naval gunfire at H plus six hours, and the loading of vehicles was planned to fit this anticipated delay.

The Camel Force was joined by one combat command of the French 1st Armored Division, composed of over 5,000 men and 1,000 vehicles. The French were mounted in five motor transports, six LSTs, and one LCI at Oran and followed convoy route number three to join the Camel convoy off Corsica. Also from Oran came the United States battleship *Arkansas*, one heavy cruiser, the USS *Tuscaloosa*, five light cruisers, and 11 destroyers to give fire support to the force.

To supervise the embarkation of all follow-up troops not included in the D-Day assault, a Seventh Army Rear Echelon, commanded as aforesaid by Brigadier General Kelly, remained at Naples. General Kelly had been designated Near Shore Control Officer and was connected by direct radio channel with the Forward Echelon, Seventh Army, on the far shore. All changes in priorities in mounting troops and supplies that were made necessary by developments on the far shore were radioed to the near shore for action. Four liaison officers with the Near Shore Control were stationed, one with Mediterranean Base Section at Oran, two with Northern Base Section in Corsica, and one at the port of

Taranto, so as to control the shipment of troops and supplies from these points.

Near Shore Control officers also served to check on the operation of the base sections, to insure that Seventh Army units carried out the mounting plan fully and on schedule. The steady, uninterrupted flow of troops and supplies according to priority changes based on the tactical situation continued until all major units of Seventh Army had been dispatched and a base of supply created in France. Through this means more than 125,000 troops, 34,000 vehicles, and 165,000 tons of cargo reached southern France between 18 and 31 August 1944.



**MEN AND EQUIPMENT IN NAPLES AWAITING LANDING CRAFT
FOR THE INVASION**

"... the troop list totalled 155,419 personnel and 20,031 vehicles ..."

Moving to Rendezvous

The vessels of the Alpha, Delta, and Camel Attack Forces left the Naples area on 11, 12, and 13 August, the slower vessels sailing first.

Seventy-two hours prior to embarkation, maps in sealed packages and the Seventh Army map identification code and key in a sealed envelope had been delivered to unit S-2s. These were to be opened four hours after sailing and all assault troops carefully briefed. First the unit officers were briefed and they in turn instructed the enlisted men under their commands. By the use of charts, pictures, blackboards, and sponge rubber models showing terrain, the exact mission of each assault team was explained in detail. Prior to debarkation all watches were synchronized with ship's time.

Shoulder patches and appropriate flag brassards, both American and French, were distributed. Soldiers sat about the deck sewing on their insignia and reading the "Pocket Guide To France". Rations for the first days were issued, with each man receiving one K ration, one D ration, a small bottle of Halazone tablets to purify water, one bottle



INVASION LOADING OF LSTs IN BAGNOLI HARBOR, ITALY

"... Said General Patch: 'We are embarking for a decisive campaign . . . The agonized people of Europe anxiously await our coming' . . ."

of salt tablets, and two packages of cigarettes. Units were issued two rations of either C, 10-in-1, or B, plus one of D on a basis of strength. The voyage was uneventful. There was no enemy opposition by submarine, surface craft, or aircraft. The convoys sailed northward along the western coast of Italy and passed through the Straits of Bonifacio. On the evening of 14 August a message from General Patch was read over the ships' loud speakers:

Soldiers of the Seventh Army:

We are embarking for a decisive campaign in Europe. Side by side, wearing the same uniform and using the same equipment, battle experienced French and American soldiers are fighting with a single purpose and common aim -- destruction of Naziism and the German Army. The agonized people of Europe anxiously await our coming. We cannot and will not fail. We will not stop until the last vestige of German tyranny has been completely crushed. No greater honor could come to us than this opportunity to fight to the bitter end in order to restore all that is good and decent and righteous in mankind. We are an inspired Army. God be with us.

At approximately 1900 hours, 14 August 1944 off the Western coast of Corsica the *DRAGOON* convoy met in rendezvous and turned toward its objective.

Softening the Target

The strategy of Operation *DRAGOON* included plans to soften the beach defenses by concentrated bombing and to isolate the assault area by special landings prior to H-Hour. To accomplish this isolation the specially-trained American Special Service Force, the French Commandos, and the French Naval Assault Party were to land at midnight 14-15 August on the flanks of the invasion beaches. The 1st Airborne Task Force was to be dropped before dawn 15 August in the rear of the target area, thereby preventing the enemy from reinforcing his coastal defenses. The Air Force was to step up its regular offensive operations against enemy lines of communication and military installations in southern France and Italy, turning attention to the invasion as D-Day and H-Hour approached. The fire support ships of the Navy

were to shell the beaches just prior to H-Hour. The Air Corps started the execution of the pre-invasion bombing during the first week in August.



MEN LOADING INTO GLIDERS FOR THE INVASION TAKE-OFF

" . . . The 1st Airborne Task Force was to be dropped before dawn 15 August in the rear of the target area, preventing the enemy from reinforcing his coastal defenses . . . "

While the embarkation of the ground forces was in progress, the XII Tactical Air Command under General Saville was already softening the enemy for invasion. Fighter bombers from bases in Corsica and Sardinia were attacking coastal defense guns, beach defenses, lines of communication, air fields, and radar installations. Assigned air support included six groups of P-47s, three wings of R.A.F. Spitfires, one squadron of A-20s, one squadron of Beaufighters, two squadrons of tactical reconnaissance Spitfires, one squadron of P-51s, and one squadron of photographic reconnaissance aircraft.

Their offensive support of Operation *DRAGOON* was divided into four phases: Phase I, period 5 August to five days prior to D-Day;

Phase II, from D minus five to 0350 hours D-Day, known as Operation *NUTMEG*; Phase III, 0350 hours D-Day to H-Hour, known as Operation *YOKUM*; and Phase IV, the period after 0800 15 August, known as Operation *DUCROT*.

The first phase was a continuation of the regular air activities in the Mediterranean Theater, designed to assist in the future assault on southern France, but to appear to be supporting the offensive in northern Italy or in Normandy. Tactical surprise could not be jeopardized. Enemy air fields, submarine bases, and major communication lines were attacked in the Marseille-Toulouse area, the Genoa area, and in the Po Valley.

Operation *NUTMEG* opened on 10 August with attacks by P-47s on gun positions on Cape Esteral, Cape Benat, the Isle of Levant, and Carmarat. Radar installations from Marseille to Cannes were attacked with explosives dropped during the course of 410 sorties on the following day. As *NUTMEG* was essentially a cover plan, on 12 August the Strategic Air Force dispatched 139 B-17s and 94 B-24s against Sete, and a small force against gun positions at Marseille. Fighter bombers of the 87th Fighter Wing flew 384 sorties against communications, destroying bridges at Arles, Tarascon, and Avignon. Medium bombers again struck the invasion coast. On 13 August enemy airfields in the Rhone Valley and aircraft on the ground received special attention from over one hundred P-47s. As the convoys began to sail, the air assault increased accordingly. Gun positions, bridges, and communications were blasted by 626 heavy bombers escorted by 241 fighters. Four Wellington bombers scanned the convoy route for two U-boats reported at sea.

Restricted visibility interfered with the original schedule, but by 0350 on D-Day virtually the entire *NUTMEG* task had been accomplished. Effective sorties totalled 5,408, divided about evenly between the Strategic and Tactical Air Commands. Tonnage dropped totalled 6,400, of which the Strategic Force supplied 4,451. The effort cost 50 aircraft, of which 15 were heavies, four medium, two patrol bombers, and 29 fighters or fighter bombers.

During the 24 hours prior to D-Day the attention of the Air Force was directed more specifically to the invasion coast. Bombers

ranged inland to strike fuel dumps and motor transport, radar installations, coastal watching stations, and gun positions on the coast itself. Fighter planes flew over 200 sorties to cover the assembling invasion convoys off Corsica. During the whole *NUTMEG* phase the enemy offered merely token resistance, limiting his air activities to fast reconnaissance trips to watch convoy movements. The Germans were apparently aware of the impending assault, but they were confused as to the exact area of assault.

To add to the enemy's confusion, the cover operation *FERDINAND* was carried out during the night of 14-15 August. Two naval diversion "forces", including heavy ships, sailed at 1800, 14 August to feign assault west of the selected beaches in the Ciotat area, which is between Marseille and Toulon, and to the east between Cannes and Nice. To simulate an airborne assault, five aircraft left Corsica after midnight (O115, 15 August), each carrying 5,780 pounds of parachute dummies, rifle simulators, and window (strips of paper covered with metallic paint to confuse enemy radar). This material was dropped from a height of 600 feet in a zone near Ciotat. Immediately the enemy was alerted, as the pilots reported many flashes, colored lights, and small explosions. The success of the operation was later established from prisoners taken on D-Day.

Experience in previous invasions had taught the value of concentrated air attacks on targets in the assault area. In keeping with this idea an all-out effort was made to soften the strong points of the invasion coast immediately before H-Hour. At first light on D-Day patrols of P-38s, Spitfires, Hellcats, and Wildcats from the Carrier Force, all carrying bombs, struck at the assault area. The Air Plan called for administering 1,000 pounds of explosives for each ten yards of invasion beach at H minus one hour. For this task 40 heavy bombers and 120 medium bombers were assigned to each 1,000 yards of beach. On schedule at 0650 hours, 83 B-17s, and 138 B-26s struck Alpha beaches with excellent results. Because the beach area was overcast, the attack on Delta and Camel had to be somewhat restricted for the safety of our surface forces. The strongly fortified northern portion of Camel Red Beach was bombed between 0650 and 0720 hours by 162 B-25s with

good coverage. Meanwhile fighter bombers and heavy guns of the Navy were pounding coastal batteries in the same area. Bomb loads dropped on the beaches consisted largely of small fragmentation and demolition bombs, instantaneously fused; but for gun positions large demolition bombs with short delay fusing were used. All told, in operation *YOKUM* the Mediterranean Allied Air Force dispatched 959 sorties, of which 610 were effective, and dropped 774 tons of explosive.

Operation *DUCROT* commenced at H-Hour. During the course of D-Day, 3,936 sorties were flown, the mightiest air effort ever put out in a single day in the Mediterranean. The Air Corps provided continuous cover for the invasion area and struck at the enemy's lines of communication, troop concentrations, and movements in the rear. Throughout the day fighter planes from Corsica and from carriers flew more than 500 sorties over the beach and adjacent areas.

The Naval Fire Support ships commenced long-range bombardment of prearranged targets at 0530. Until 0800 this fire was almost continuous, lifting only when bombers were over the targets. Following behind the minesweepers, ships approached the shore and laid down a "drenching" fire on beach fortifications. In all, naval guns threw over 15,900 projectiles into the beach defenses. White phosphorous shells were included and were reported very effective. The aerial bombing had ceased at 0730 to allow the smoke over the area to clear and to enable the naval gunners to fire without interference on observed targets and positions revealed by gun flashes. The shelling continued until 0750; and then it shifted to the flanks, for the hour of the major assault was at hand. Meanwhile the pre-H-Hour assault forces had landed and begun the isolation of enemy forces in the strategic area.

Final Isolation of Target Area

Plans to isolate the invasion area by commando assaults on the flanks went into operation on the night of 14-15 August. Ships of the Support Force (Naval Task Force No. 86) moved from Propriano, Corsica, at 1130, 14 August. Shortly after darkness the sharp outlines of the cliffs of Levant and Port Cros appeared in the offing.

The troops of the Special Service Force received last minute instructions and briefing as the convoy moved into position. The islands were to be assaulted by scaling the cliffs on the seaward side.



THE BEACHLESS SHORES OF THE ISLE OF PORT CROS

" . . . Commando assaults went into operation on the night of 14—15 August. Shortly after darkness the sharp outlines of the cliffs of Levant and Port Cros appeared . . . Surprise was complete . . ."

These landing sites had been selected by Colonel Walker, Commander of the Special Service Force, after study of aerial photographs and later reconnaissance from a British submarine. French officers, and others familiar with the terrain, advised that a landing over the south coast of the islands was impracticable or impossible. This situation was just what was wanted, since the Germans would probably believe likewise and make little or no effort to defend the cliffs. The troops had been especially trained for the task. After they had scaled the cliffs, they were to destroy all enemy defenses, particularly coastal guns that might threaten the invasion fleet. When relieved by French troops on the

evening of D-Day, the Special Service Force was to withdraw with its prisoners to the mainland.

Weather conditions were ideal, the sea calm, the night dark enough to cover the operation, but with sufficient star illumination to enable landing craft to identify prominent landmarks and landing areas. The transports stopped approximately 8,000 yards offshore, and debarkation into 10-man rubber assault boats began at 2300 hours. These boats were secured three to a single towline, making a total of nine towed by a single LCI to within 1,000 yards off shore. As the assault boats were being paddled toward the beach, scouts in kayaks and electric surfboats preceded them to mark the landing spots with small lights. The 1st Regiment, approximately 650 men, landed on Port Cros, and the 2nd and 3rd Regiments, about 1,300 strong, debarked at midnight on the island of Levant. Both groups included attached Naval Shore Fire Control parties. The landings were unopposed and all groups reached assembly areas without interference.

Surprise was complete. Although the enemy had been alerted for an assault on 15 August, reports from prisoners revealed that the Germans did not expect an attack up the cliffs on the seaward side of the islands. Resistance on Levant was scattered and moderate, and the enemy shortly withdrew to the port of Levant, where he put up a stiffer fight. By dawn a beach was cleared, supplies landed, and the wounded evacuated. The coastal defense battery at the eastern end of the island was found to be a cleverly camouflaged dummy. During D-Day, mopping up continued on Levant, but because of radio failure regular reports could not be sent the Force Command Post aboard the USS *Catocin*. During the afternoon General Patch sent his aide-de-camp to Levant to investigate and report. Mr. Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, accompanied him. They found only snipers and small pockets of resistance still active. By 2234 hours on D-Day all resistance on Levant ceased.

The 1st Special Service Regiment on Port Cros met little initial opposition, but the German garrison withdrew to an old fort on the west end of the island and there resisted tenaciously. This fight continued into the next day, and during the hours of darkness an enemy battery at Cap Benat shelled Port Cros. This delayed the off-loading and

installation of radar equipment. By radio the Shore Fire Control Party directed naval fire on the fort from HMS *Ramillies*. On the morning of 17 August an attack was launched, and shortly afterward two German officers and 46 enlisted men surrendered. Their mission accomplished and the islands garrisoned by French army and navy personnel from Corsica, the Special Service troops were evacuated in LSI's to the mainland, where they assembled in the vicinity of Sylvabelle on Cavalaire Bay.

To protect and secure the left land flank of the invasion coast, Romeo Force was landed by the Naval Support Force at Cape Negre prior to H-Hour. This force of French Commandos, under Lieutenant Colonel Bouvet, landed from three LCIs shortly after midnight 14-15 August west of the Alpha beaches. Their mission was to destroy all enemy coastal defenses on the cape, to establish a road block on the coastal highway, and to seize and hold the high ground two miles to the north. Two advance light detachments were sent in small boats as an initial assault force.

The first detachment of 70 men beached from rubber assault boats at the eastern base of Cape Negre, scaled the steep banks, and took the enemy by surprise. They destroyed the gun emplacements and established a tank block in a pass on the coastal highway. This operation was successfully and quickly accomplished. The second detachment was to land in two sections on either side of Le Rayol beach, two miles east of the Cape, to surprise and knock out the pillboxes believed to exist in that area. Afterwards they were to prepare the beach for the landing of the main force from LCIs. Because of the difficulty of locating Le Rayol beach in darkness, a small reconnaissance party preceded the detachment and marked the beach with a guide light. In spite of this precaution, one section landed near Cape Negre, where it was fired upon by the enemy and suffered some casualties. The main body followed at about 0100 hours and, failing to observe the guide lights, also landed in the wrong area, this time at Le Canadel between Le Rayol and the Cape. Since time was of the utmost importance, the LCIs proceeded to land on the beach at Le Canadel. The enemy was

found to be confused and disorganized, and the landing was accomplished without a single shot being fired.

Taking advantage of the enemy's disorder, the force hastened to accomplish its mission with little interference. By morning the beaches were cleared and a junction effected to the west with the detachment holding the tank block at Cape Negre pass. During the morning the enemy reorganized and launched several violent counterattacks, but these were repulsed. The Commandos continued to advance inland, clearing the towns of Le Rayol and La Mole of Germans and mopping up all pockets of resistance in the area.

At approximately 1300 on 15 August a combat patrol from the U.S. Third Division contacted the French Commandos. This brought the force under the command of VI Corps; at 2000 hours the Commandos received orders to resume their advance westward to Le Lavandou.

To sever German communications to the east between Cannes and the right flank of the assault area, a road block was to be established on the coastal highway prior to H-Hour. A demolition party of 67 French Marines was organized, known as the *ROSIE* Force or the French Naval Assault Group. The force was to land in the vicinity of Pointe des Trayas on the night of D minus one and to block the roads from Cannes to St. Raphael and Frejus. The block was to be constructed by the demolition of trees and telegraph poles and by laying mines in critical areas. During the night of 14-15 August the party was landed from four torpedo boats in seven rubber boats on the beach south of Theoule-sur-Mer. In the darkness the Marines ran into barbed wire defenses and anti-personnel mines. The explosions and confusion alerted the enemy, who immediately opened fire with deadly effect. The party dropped their demolition equipment and attempted to withdraw. However, the operation failed completely and on the afternoon of D plus one the survivors made contact with the 36th Division. Twenty-two wounded were evacuated by the 56th Medical Battalion, and many of the rest had either been killed or captured.

To isolate the assault area completely it was necessary to cut the coastal highway on each end of the projected beachhead and to block

enemy movement from the rear. The coastal highway was bisected at Frejus by a road leading from the interior down a defile to the coast. The 1st Airborne Task Force, known as *RUGBY* Force, was to land at various hours on D-Day beginning at 0430 near Le Muy and Le Luc to establish the necessary road blocks, to prevent enemy movement toward the beaches, and to help reduce the defenses in the Frejus area.

The Airborne Task Force was created and trained especially for the requirements of the assault on southern France. It was activated on 15 July under command of General Frederick. The Airborne Force included the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade (British), the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the 1st Battalion, 551st Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion, the 602nd



PARATROOPERS AND A SUPPLY DROP ON LATE D DAY

"... No air opposition was encountered, and the paratroopers had drifted down safely through the fog. On the ground the enemy was contacted immediately, but resistance was light ..."

Glider Pack Howitzer Battalion, and glider-borne supporting troops. The supporting troops included two chemical mortar companies, an infantry antitank company, two engineer companies, a signal company, a medical collecting company, and an ordnance detachment. The total strength of the force was 9,732 men to be transported in 535 C-47s and C-53s and 465 gliders.

The provisional Troop Carrier Air Division was detailed to transport the Force. To avoid convoy routes to the target area, aerial routes were set up east of the assault corridor and marked by beacon ships. Three drop zones, O, A, and C, were chosen along the Nartuby and Argens Rivers near the towns of La Motte, Trans-en-Provence, and Le Muy. Zone A and Zone O were either flat, cultivated fields or gently rolling ground suitable for both parachute and glider operations. Zone C was a broken, rocky area, much less desirable. On D-Day there was



AMERICAN TROOPS AT A FRENCH CROSSROADS 15 AUGUST 1944

"... Defensive lines were established at all zones, and all enemy forces were driven out, except in the village of Le Muy . . ."

a dense fog over these zones, but most of the parachute elements dropped on or near their objectives. The 509th Battalion Combat Team dropped in Zone C about 0430 hours; the 517th Regimental Combat Team in Zone A at 0435 hours; and the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade in Zone O about 0510.

No air opposition was encountered, and the paratroopers drifted down safely through the fog. On the ground the enemy was contacted immediately; but resistance was light, primarily small arms fire. Defensive lines were established at all zones, and all enemy forces driven out, except in the village of Le Muy. Preparations were made for the arrival of the gliderborne elements.

The first glider serial landed in Zone O about 0930. During the day other serials arrived, and by late afternoon the whole *RUGBY* Force had landed. Contact with all elements within the Force was



AIRBORNE TROOPS LEAVING THEIR GLIDERS

" . . . the first glider serial landed about 0930 . . . By late afternoon the whole Rugby Force had landed . . . "

established and the command post set up by 1800 hours. By the end of D-Day the villages of La Mitan, La Motte, Castron, and Les Serres had been occupied and 103 prisoners taken. A protective screen had been established over the road net connecting the invasion coast with the interior. During the day the enemy counterattacked in the vicinity of Les Arcs but was repulsed by the 517th Regimental Combat Team.

The 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade had successfully blocked the highway at Le Muy but had been unable to take the town. The capture of Le Muy was then assigned to the 550th Glider Infantry Battalion. During the early morning of 16 August an unsuccessful attack was launched against Le Muy. The airborne troops continued to attack and overcame determined resistance at about 1500 hours. During D plus one other elements of the force fanned out and consolidated their positions. Late in the afternoon of the same day contact



THE LIBERATION OF THE VILLAGE OF LA MOTTE

"... at the close of D plus 1 the 1st Airborne Task Force had destroyed all enemy resistance in its assigned zone ..."

was made with reconnaissance elements of the 45th Division. At the close of D plus one the 1st Airborne Task Force had destroyed all enemy resistance in its assigned zone of responsibility and had taken 493 prisoners of war.

An unexpected achievement was the assistance given by airborne troops in the capture of St. Tropez in the 3rd Division area. About 0430 on D-Day one serial of 29 planes became confused by ground fog and dropped its load at the wrong point. Thus two full batteries and parts of two others of the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, including the Battalion Commander, landed about three miles south of St. Tropez near sizeable enemy coastal installations and in the target area of the Allied bombers and naval guns. These paratroopers weathered the bombardment by their own forces and, although considerably shaken up, suffered no casualties. They managed to assemble, put five guns in operation, and capture intact one enemy antiaircraft battery, two coastal batteries, and a garrison of 240 Germans. Part of one battery, along with elements of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, entered St. Tropez and occupied the town. When the forward troops of the 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division, reached St. Tropez they found the paratroopers attacking the last German defenders in the town strongpoint known as the Citadel.

In the parachute and glider operations no aircraft or gliders were lost from enemy action, but many gliders were wrecked in landing, and there were at least 148 glider casualties. During the operation 987 sorties were flown, 407 gliders towed, and 9,000 airborne personnel carried, along with 221 jeeps, 213 artillery pieces, 4,938 pounds of bombs, 759,112 rounds of ammunition, 56,896 pounds of rations, and 744,831 pounds of miscellaneous materiel. On D-Day, D plus one, and D plus two over 287 tons of supplies were dropped by parachute; but because of wind conditions and lack of sufficient time to search the area thoroughly, only 40 percent was found.

The mission of the airborne operation was successfully accomplished, and prior to H-Hour the rear of the assault beaches was secured. On 16 August Major General John K. Cannon, Commanding General

of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, evaluated the operation as follows:

Your troop carrier people put up a grand show yesterday. Your troop carrier units were equally responsible together with other organizations of the Tactical Air Force in making the air part of this operation so successful.



D DAY ON A ROAD IN SOUTHERN FRANCE

"... While the transports and landing craft were approaching the beaches, the enemy in the assault area was cut off from his reinforcements ... the mission of the airborne operation was successfully accomplished ..."

With the exception of the operation of the French Marines at Theoule-sur-Mer all pre-H-Hour activities were successful. While the transports and landing craft were approaching the beaches, the enemy in the assault area was cut off from his reinforcements, and his defenses were pounded and seriously damaged. There was a feeling among enemy officers that they were deliberately left to their fate.

CHAPTER VI

The VI Corps Assault

The VI Corps convoys arrived in the assault area on 15 August 1944 according to plan. To organize and accommodate such a large assembly



GENERAL VIEW OF ST. TROPEZ HARBOR

"... the VI Corps convoys arrived in the assault area on 15 August 1944 according to plan ..."

of ships, the sea off the assault area was divided into two zones, one for fire support ships and the other for naval transports. Following behind the minesweepers, the fire support ships moved to within two miles of

the shore and opened fire on the beach defenses in the 45 mile area from Cape Negre on the west to the Gulf of Napoule on the east. The ships continued to fire on the beach defenses as they moved in. Behind this shield of naval armor and protecting gunfire, the transports assembled and began debarking their troops into hundreds of small landing craft. The awaiting troops watched the naval guns shell the beaches and saw the bombers drop their loads without encountering any enemy air opposition. Landing craft then made their way toward the smoking beaches in prescribed lanes between battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. As the assault craft approached shore, naval fire shifted to the flanks of the beaches.

The VI Corps Mission

The United States VI Corps, commanded by Major General Truscott, had been assigned the mission of assaulting simultaneously the beaches from Cape Cavalaire to Agay. The Corps was to establish a beachhead, and to advance rapidly inland to contact other friendly forces and secure airfield sites. The tactical plan called for employing three divisions abreast to destroy enemy beach defenses and to advance rapidly inland in order to extend the beachhead to the "Blue Line". Contact was to be made with the Airborne Task Force in the interior and other forces on either flank. The 3rd Infantry Division (Alpha Force) was assigned to the left flank, from Cape Cavalaire to the Cape of St. Tropez, including the town of St. Tropez. The 45th Division (Delta Force) was to assault the center of the invasion area, from the Cape of St. Tropez eastward to Point Alexandre, including the town of Ste. Maxime. The 36th Infantry Division (Camel Force) was to land and advance on the right flank, from Point Alexandre to the Agay Region. In the Camel area was the important Camel Red Beach, near the town of St. Raphael, and nearby was the road junction and airport at Frejus. The "Blue Line" was a tactical boundary drawn as an arc from Cape Leoube, approximately ten miles west of Cape Negre, the western flank of the assault area, cutting through Collobrieres, Le Cannet des Maures, Trans-en-Provence, and Bagnols-en-Forêt to the sea at Theoule-sur-Mer, on the extreme eastern flank of the VI Corps area. This line delimited a beach-



head approximately 45 miles long, 20 miles deep, well established on high ground and including suitable terrain for air strips. The divisions were to advance beyond the "Blue Line" on Corps order.

Alpha Force



MAJ. GEN. JOHN. W. O'DANIEL
". . . to capture St. Tropez . . ."

On the left flank the 3rd Infantry Division, under the command of Major General O'Daniel, was to assault Alpha Red Beach (Beach 259, on the Bay of Cavalaire) and Alpha Yellow Beach (Beach 261, on the Bay of Pampelonne), in order to overcome enemy resistance and to capture the town of St. Tropez. After the St. Tropez peninsula had been cleared, the 3rd Division was to assist the 45th Division in clearing Beach 262, then advance rapidly west and south-west along the coast to contact the French Groupe de Commandos (Romeo Force), and to reach the "Blue Line" on the extreme western flank.

From 0710 to 0745 hours on D-Day, while the bombardment was still in progress, shallow minesweepers cleared boat lanes from 1,500 yards to within 100 yards of the beaches. To clear the last 100 yards of underwater obstacles, 18 drone boats were sent forward and all but three detonated properly. One got out of control and headed back toward the fleet. It exploded soon afterwards and damaged a naval vessel. From 0750 to 0758 hours naval craft poured rockets and inshore fire into the beaches. A dense, even pattern of fire on shore was reported by the first assault wave as troops came in under cover of the barrage.

At 0800 hours the 7th Infantry Combat Team struck Alpha Red Beach and the 15th Infantry Combat Team landed on Alpha Yellow Beach. Included with each regimental combat team was a smoke detail from the 3rd Chemical Battalion, four amphibious tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion, four tank destroyers from the 601st Tank

Destroyer Battalion, Naval Shore Fire Control Parties, and a section of the 36th Combat Engineers. Among the first to land was a specially-formed Battle Patrol of 154 men to be employed on special missions.

The 7th Infantry landed with the 3rd Battalion on the left, the 2nd Battalion on the right, and the 1st Battalion in reserve. Off-shore this force had encountered rows of concrete tetrahedrons with encased tellermines. Several small landing craft were blown up, and 60 casualties resulted. The demolition crews began immediately to clear the way for other landing craft. About 2,000 yards from the beaches, amphibious tanks were launched from LCTs. Of the four at Alpha Red Beach three got ashore and supported the infantry, but the fourth was struck by a naval rocket falling short, and the tank commander was killed. Subsequently the tank was sunk near the shore by an underwater mine.

As the infantry moved over the beach, it encountered no enemy fire; but wooden box mines and wire slowed the advance. At 0825 hours the enemy came out of bomb shelters and opened fire with small arms and mortars on the right flank. However, amphibious tanks, tank destroyers, and howitzers that had landed from DUKWs were in position to meet this fire; and the 7th Infantry continued to advance inland against scattered and light opposition. The first prisoners seemed dazed and well shaken up by the preliminary bombardment.

Battle patrols had been sent out on the flanks as the remainder of the regiment moved over the beach. While the infantry silenced enemy small arms fire, the engineers were clearing lanes for vehicles through the mine fields and wire. This action progressed rapidly; at 0850 hours the violet smoke signal was given, signifying that enemy beach defenses were neutralized and that the division reserve, the 30th Regimental Combat Team, could land. Within ten minutes the 30th Infantry was landing and moving forward through the right flank of the 7th Regimental Combat Team.

Eight successive waves had now landed on schedule at Alpha Red Beach, and the beachhead was being steadily enlarged. Supported by tanks and tank destroyers, the two regimental combat teams moved

rapidly inland on both flanks. The 7th Infantry turned westward; its 3rd Battalion advanced along the coastal road and cleared the town of Cavalaire-sur-Mer. By 1330 hours 3rd Battalion troops had reached a road block in the vicinity of Cape Negre held by the French Commandos. By this time the 2nd Battalion, on the right, had advanced through the town of La Croix to its first objective, the high ground along the road two miles north of the town. When relieved by the 30th Regimental Combat Team at 1430 hours, the 2nd Battalion turned and advanced southwest toward La Mole and Highway 98, following the 1st Battalion. *end*

The 1st Battalion had been released from reserve on the beach about noon; it advanced inland about four miles to reach Highway 98 and moved west along the highway to La Mole, passing through the town about dark. At dawn on 16 August the battalion encountered an enemy outpost. Company A began firing on hostile machine gun positions, while C Company turned into the woods south of the highway and opened up against the enemy with mortars. Resistance was quickly overcome, and the battalion proceeded to a road junction about 1,000 yards away, where the enemy was again contacted. Tanks and tank destroyers were sent forward in an effort to draw fire and thus discover the enemy positions. The Germans were apparently well dug-in on the high ground beyond the road junction. The 1st Battalion fought all day on 16 August with all its companies committed. Supporting weapons, including artillery, had to be employed before enemy resistance was broken early the following morning by the coordinated efforts of the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

After passing the 1st Battalion and the enemy road block, leading elements of the 2nd Battalion, riding on tanks and tank destroyers, were met near St. Honore by members of the French Forces of the Interior who stated that a battalion of the enemy was in position three-quarters of a mile east of the village. The infantry dismounted; tanks and tank destroyers were ordered to deploy and lead the advance toward the strongpoint. About 1600 hours on 17 August contact was made and an enemy antitank gun knocked out. One platoon of E Company aided by several members of the French Forces of the Interior,

then advanced on the gun emplacement and captured 25 prisoners.

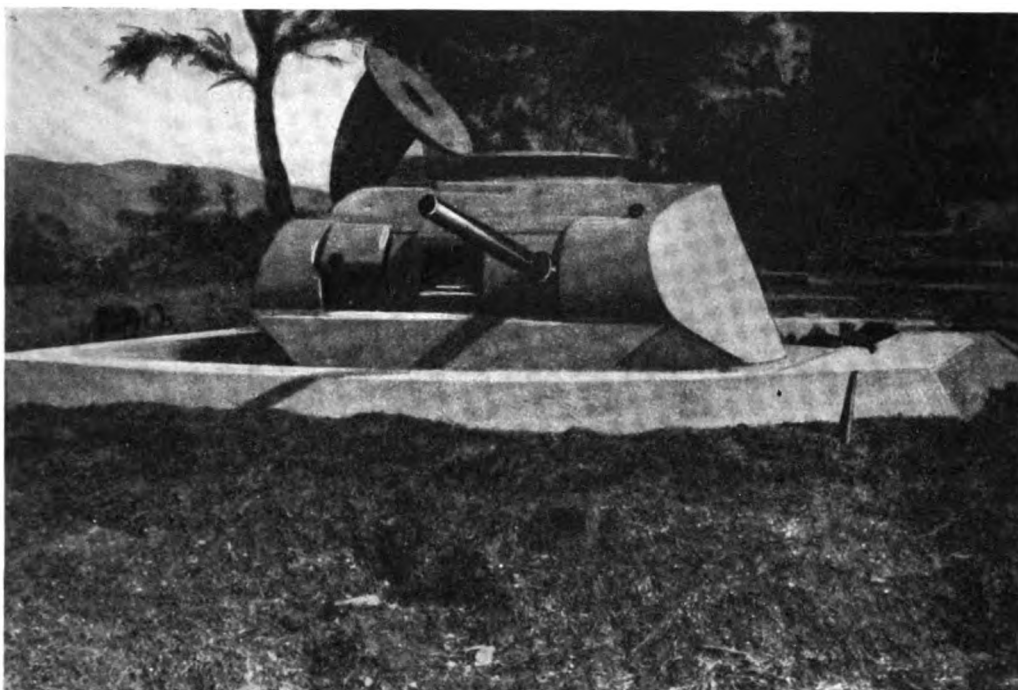
Meanwhile the other platoons of E Company deployed and moved up to the high ground south and east of the village. Here they encountered about 75 well-entrenched enemy. After a quick battalion reconnaissance, G Company was ordered to move around the left flank and attack enemy positions from the south. Tanks and tank destroyers fired on the hill-mass preparatory to the attack. This, coupled with E Company's threat to his rear, caused the enemy to start abandoning his prepared positions. The attack was pressed by both companies and the village occupied and the road cleared.

By dark on the evening of D-Day the 7th Regimental Combat Team held a line from the coast west of Cape Negre six miles inland to the La Mole area. Little resistance was encountered during the morning, but at 2400 hours the advance along the coastal road was brought to a standstill by an enemy strongpoint two miles west of Cape Negre. Here the 3rd Battalion encountered a road block of pillboxes protected by mines and wire, covered by three antitank guns, six or eight machine guns, and riflemen. Although tanks and tank destroyers were brought up to fire on the block and two companies succeeded in outflanking it on the north and attacking it from the rear, the enemy continued to hold.

The attacking forces were also under fire during the night from enemy coastal guns further west in the area of La Fossette and Le Lavandou. To silence these batteries, the French Commandos, now under 3rd Division control, were sent around the roadblock to clear the Cape Benat peninsula of enemy forces. The following day the Commandos captured the batteries after a stiff fight, and the Americans were able to reduce the strongpoint at Point de la Et. During this action K and L Companies bore the brunt of the fighting. K Company made a wide flanking movement and took the enemy positions from the rear. Both companies used hand grenades and rifle fire to dislodge the enemy from pillboxes and dug-in positions.

The 3rd Battalion then continued west along the coastal road against only slight opposition, by-passing the 2nd Battalion as

it moved through St. Honore and north of La Londe les Maures. The French Commandos continued to mop up isolated enemy groups on the Cape Benat peninsula and then occupied Chateau de Leoubé on the evening of D plus two.

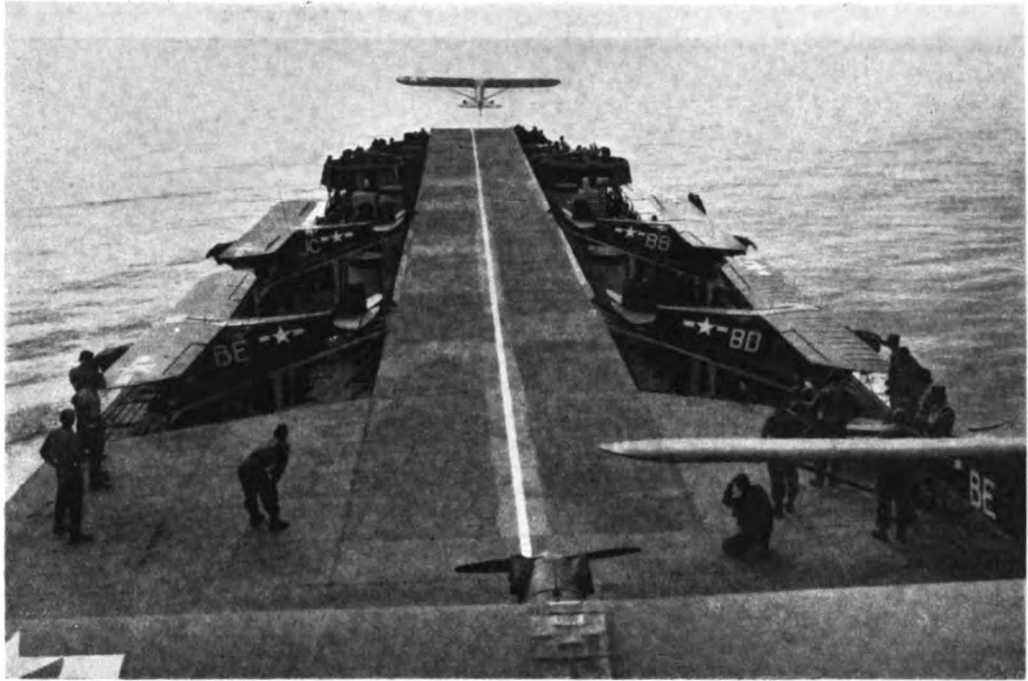


A TANK TURRET SET IN CONCRETE AND USED AS A PILLBOX

" . . . Both companies used hand grenades and rifle fire to dislodge the enemy from pillboxes and dug-in positions . . . "

On the right flank of the 3rd Infantry Division the 15th Regimental Combat Team landed at H-Hour over Alpha Yellow Beach and reduced all beach defenses within 40 minutes. The 2nd Battalion, 36th Engineers, immediately started clearing the beach of mines and laying beach pontoons for LST landings, since the gradient was too shallow for ships to come up to the beach. Of the four amphibious tanks supporting the assault, three landed safely and one was swamped by landing craft. Later another was disabled on the beach by a broken track. The infantry advanced inland against light small arms fire. The 1st Battalion cleaned out an enemy strongpoint on the northern portion

of the beach and attacked inland some 5,000 yards to seize and occupy the high ground northeast of the town of Ramatuelle. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions moved to the north and northeast and quickly seized the high ground overlooking St. Tropez. The 2nd Battalion continued



A 3RD DIVISION BABY AIRCRAFT CARRIER IMPROVISED FROM LST-906
". . . a cub observation plane reported no enemy resistance or craft in the harbor of
St. Tropez . . ."

to advance to the north and destroyed an enemy strongpoint on the western edge of the town. The 3rd Battalion moved up from the east.

Previously, at 0830 hours, a cub observation plane had reported no enemy resistance or craft in the harbor of St. Tropez. Later, word was sent by the French Forces of the Interior that the town was virtually clear and the populace would be glad to receive the Americans. At 1500 hours the 3rd Battalion, having reached the outskirts of St. Tropez, found American paratroopers and French Forces of the Interior assaulting the last enemy pocket of resistance in the Citadel. K Company joined in the attack. At 1830 hours this strongpoint fell and shortly afterwards

patrols of the 15th Infantry cleared the St. Tropez peninsula of enemy troops. After nightfall the regiment assembled west of St. Tropez and marched along roads already cleared of the enemy to Collobrieres on the "Blue Line".

While the 7th Infantry was moving west from Alpha Red Beach and the 15th Infantry was clearing the St. Tropez peninsula, the 30th Infantry, after landing at H plus one and passing through the 7th, swept inland toward Cogolin and Grimaud. By forced marches and riding infantry on tanks and tank destroyers, the 30th Regimental Combat Team moved rapidly forward to occupy these towns. At 2100 hours on D-Day its patrols contacted the 157th Infantry of the 45th Division between Grimaud and Les Cadelons. The right flank of the Alpha area was now considered secure and the entire regiment was only temporarily interrupted in its advance by sniper fire and token enemy resistance. On 16 August the towns of La Garde Freinet and Les Mayons were taken, and a line was established between Gonfaron and Collobrieres on the tactical "Blue Line".

By 1200 on D-Day the assault units of the 3rd Infantry Division had reached their initial beachhead line and were advancing toward primary objectives on the "Blue Line". Meanwhile, unloading over the beaches was proceeding at a fairly satisfactory rate, although it was hampered by off-shore bars on Alpha Yellow Beach and beach mines and obstacles on Alpha Red Beach. Aided by a tank-dozer and a tank-scarifier, the engineers cleared mines from Alpha Red Beach, where explosives were thickly planted, particularly on the northern half. Naval demolition parties worked at the task of blasting out piling on Alpha Yellow Beach and tetrahedrons on Alpha Red Beach. Infantry and engineer minesweeping squads cleared exits to permit traffic in and out. Heavily mined areas extended generally no farther than 500 yards back of the beaches, and inland roads were virtually mine-free. During the morning of D-Day the beaches were occasionally shelled, but this ceased as the infantry advanced. There was no enemy air activity in the Alpha area.

Beach groups were slow to react to unexpected difficulties in unloading. Toward the end of D-Day they were reorganized in accord-

ance with changes in plan, and unloading was somewhat accelerated. The supply plan was based on five bulk-loaded LCTs averaging 130 tons each, ten Liberty ships carrying 1,000 tons each, and nine DUKWs, each with three tons of supply, combat-loaded on Liberty ships.

Three-quarters of the supplies loaded on LCTs consisted of ammunition, since it was anticipated that the assault would require a maximum of ammunition and a minimum of gasoline. However, the immediate breakthrough and rapid advance against light resistance altered these anticipated requirements. Gasoline very quickly became a critical item.

By 1400 hours all Alpha Yellow Beach landing craft were completely unloaded and combat loaders ten percent discharged, but on Alpha Red Beach the vast number of mines had delayed operations. After several disastrous encounters with mines all unloading over Red Beach was suspended until the beach could be cleared. Initially, the landing of DUKWs was delayed half an hour by small arms and mortar fire from isolated pockets on the beach, and later the total number available was found to be insufficient for handling the quantity of tonnage necessary in the rapid advance. The failure of small craft commanders to obey signals from beach groups resulted in landings at improper spots, where deep water drowned out vehicles.

Late in the afternoon of D-Day, difficulties in the complicated line of supply, from ships to shore to troops, began to straighten out. By H plus 20 hours all small craft except five LCTs were completely discharged. However, the unloading of ocean-type ships lagged far behind schedule, because all Liberty ships arrived at the transport area late. Seven of the ten Liberty ships due at noon on D-Day arrived at noon of D plus one and three not until the forenoon of D plus two. In spite of these difficulties approximately 15,900 men, 2,150 vehicles, and 225 long tons of supplies were unloaded during D-Day over beaches in the Alpha assault area. The 36th Engineer Beach Group established depots for the various classes of supplies and equipment, opened roads between the depots and the beaches, and controlled the enormous flow of traffic which poured inland.

To conceal these operations from possible enemy observation 640 smoke pots were fired on the Alpha beaches during the first three hours after the landing. As enemy resistance quieted, the smoke detail regrouped its smoke pots to be used in case of enemy air attack.

On 16 and 17 August the unloading over the beaches proceeded more rapidly, and a steady stream of supplies came in to support the advancing troops. By 1800 hours on 17 August some 48,198 men, 6,438 vehicles, and 1,060 tons of cargo had been landed and moved over the beach. Although Alpha Green Beach (260) was cleared and opened, the exits were found to be heavily mined. After D-Day the greater part of the unloading took place over Alpha Red Beach, since mines and obstacles had been successfully cleared. Statistics at the close of D-Day showed that there had been 203 casualties on Alpha Red Beach and 61 on Alpha Yellow Beach, a total of 264. This was far below expectation, considering the initial assault and constant flow of men and material. During D-Day 1,600 prisoners were taken by the 3rd Division; of this number 60 percent were non-German.

Delta Force



MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM W. EAGLES
"... to land in the center ..."

The 45th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Eagles, was to land in the center of the VI Corps assault area at H-Hour on D-Day. The mission of the Division was to clear all the assault beaches of enemy resistance and then to advance rapidly inland to gain contact with the paratroopers at Le Muy. On the west, contact was to be established with the 3rd Infantry and on the east with the 36th Infantry Division.

This section of the coast included beaches 262, 263, 263-A, 263-B, and 263-C. Beach 262 at the head of the Gulf of St. Tropez was topographically desirable for landing operations, but the flanks were considered too heavily fortified. Beach 263 at the town of Ste. Maxime

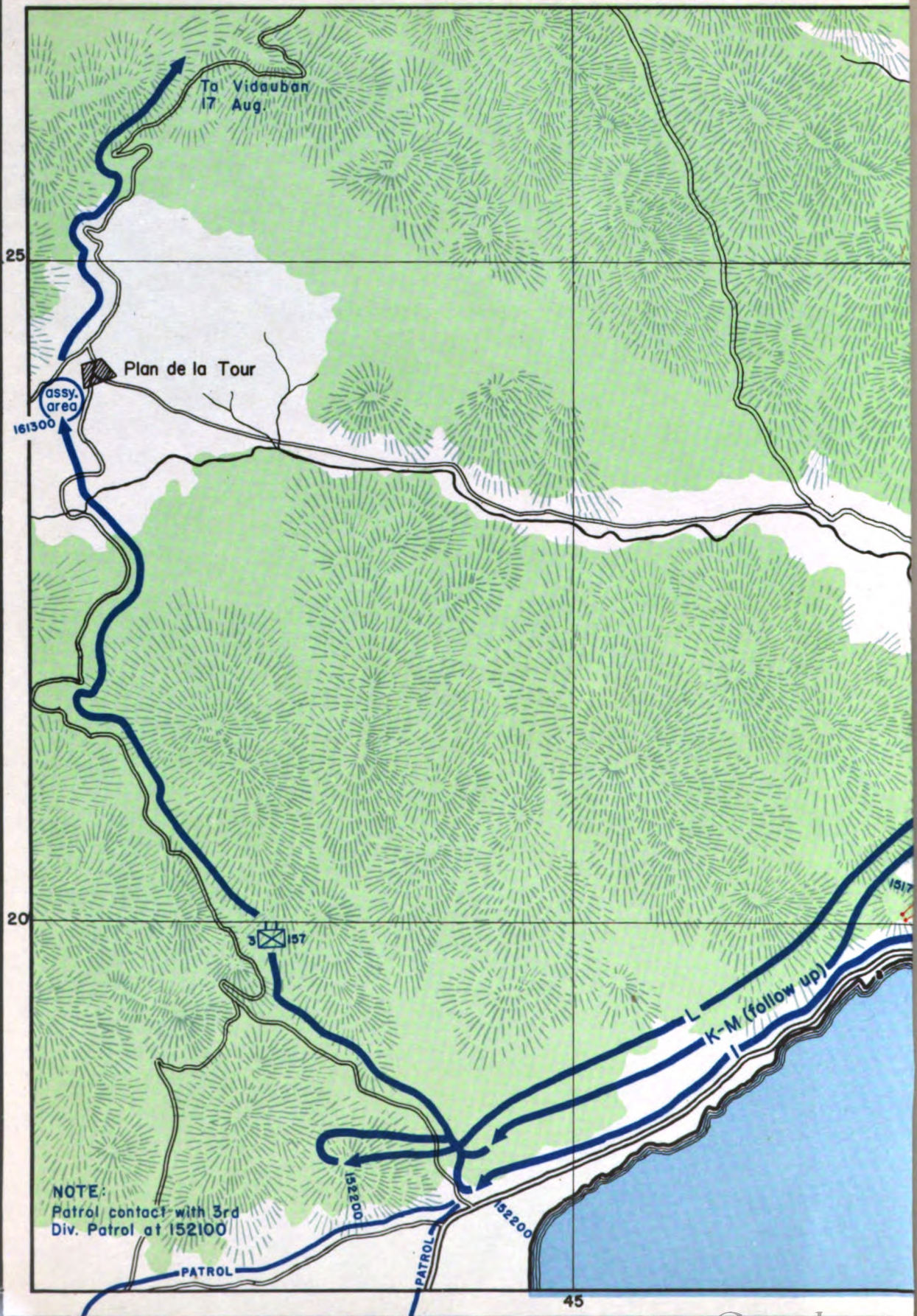
was ruled out for similar reasons. The three small beaches selected for the 45th Infantry Division assault were approximately one mile east of the town of Ste. Maxime and lay along a curving bay between Cape Sardineau and Point Alexandre. On the left, Beach 263-A was divided into two zones of operation known as Delta Red and Delta Green. In the center, Beach 263-B was designated Delta Yellow, while the right flank beach, 263-C, was Delta Blue. The designated zone of operations for the Division was flanked by the 3rd Infantry Division on the left and the 36th Infantry Division on the right. The area extended inland 15 to 20 miles to the "Blue Line" at Le Luc and Le Muy, where the 1st Airborne Task Force had previously been dropped.



THE INVADING FORCES WADE IN TO THE BEACH

"... the 45th Infantry Division landed under almost ideal amphibious conditions ..."

For four hours prior to 0800, bombers and naval guns, covered the Delta beaches with a blanket of explosives. Small minesweepers came close inshore and swept the sea lanes to within 500 yards of the



beach. Scout boats reported no underwater obstacles off shore; thus the employment of drone boats was not necessary. At 0749 hours, as the assault boats loaded with infantry gathered off shore, the Navy fired a ten minute rocket barrage which lifted just before the first wave of troops hit shore.

The 45th Infantry Division landed under almost ideal amphibious conditions with four battalions abreast. The 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry, landed on Red Beach; the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, on Green Beach; the 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry, on Yellow Beach; and the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on Blue Beach. The remaining battalions of the two regiments followed as the regimental reserve. By



DUKWs ESTABLISHING POSITIONS ON "YELLOW BEACH"

"... enemy resistance was light ... there was no serious attempt to defend ..."

0830 hours the situation was reported: "First three waves landed ... per schedule. Slight hindrance by mines and underwater obstacles Enemy resistance light" Pre-H-Hour bombardment had destroyed

or seriously damaged enemy beach defenses; and except for scattered small arms, mortar, and artillery fire there was no serious attempt to defend the beaches.

The 1st Battalion of the 157th Infantry cleared the beach area of enemy resistance and then moved inland approximately eight miles to assemble in the vicinity of Plan de la Tour. The 2nd Battalion, having followed the 1st ashore, spent the night in an assembly area near the beach and on the morning of 16 August moved to the town of Vidauban in the vicinity of the "Blue Line".

The 3rd Battalion, after having cleared the beach area, attacked toward Ste. Maxime, its first major objective. Civilians re-



CONCRETE PILLBOX BUILT OVER WATER STORAGE TANK

" . . . held up by fire from a pillbox . . . "

ported that some 500 Germans had previously moved out at 0800 hours. However, when the advance elements of the 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry, reached the outskirts of the town during the morning, they were

held up by fire from a pillbox on the quay and from street barricades. Field artillery and tank destroyers were brought up and sharp fighting ensued.

Upon entering Ste. Maxime from the north, I Company ran into heavy small arms and machine gun fire. For the next two hours there was fierce house-to-house fighting, during which the company made extensive use of hand grenades in clearing up small pockets of resistance. After the main resistance was overcome, one platoon was dispatched to mop up the waterfront. However, two strong points, one in the Hotel du Nord and the other in the dock area, continued to hold out. K Company then joined I Company in a coordinated attack on the hotel. This center of resistance was reduced only after stiff hand-to-hand fighting, which resulted in the capture of 70 prisoners and many enemy dead.

The 3rd Battalion then continued along the coast to Beach 262, which was promptly mopped-up. At 2100 hours it made contact with advance elements of the 3rd Division which indicated that enemy resistance along the coast between the Alpha and Delta assault areas had now been cleared. The 3rd Battalion moved on the Plan de la Tour, where it joined the 1st Battalion and spent the night.

The 180th Regimental Combat Team had as its initial mission to land on Beaches 263-B and 263-C (Delta Yellow and Delta Blue), to clear all resistance from the high ground east and northeast of 263-C, to capture the village of Villepey, and to assist the 36th Division in clearing Beach 264-A (Camel Red Beach) at the base of the Argens River Valley. It was then to move rapidly to the "Blue Line" and gain contact with the paratroopers in the vicinity of Le Muy.

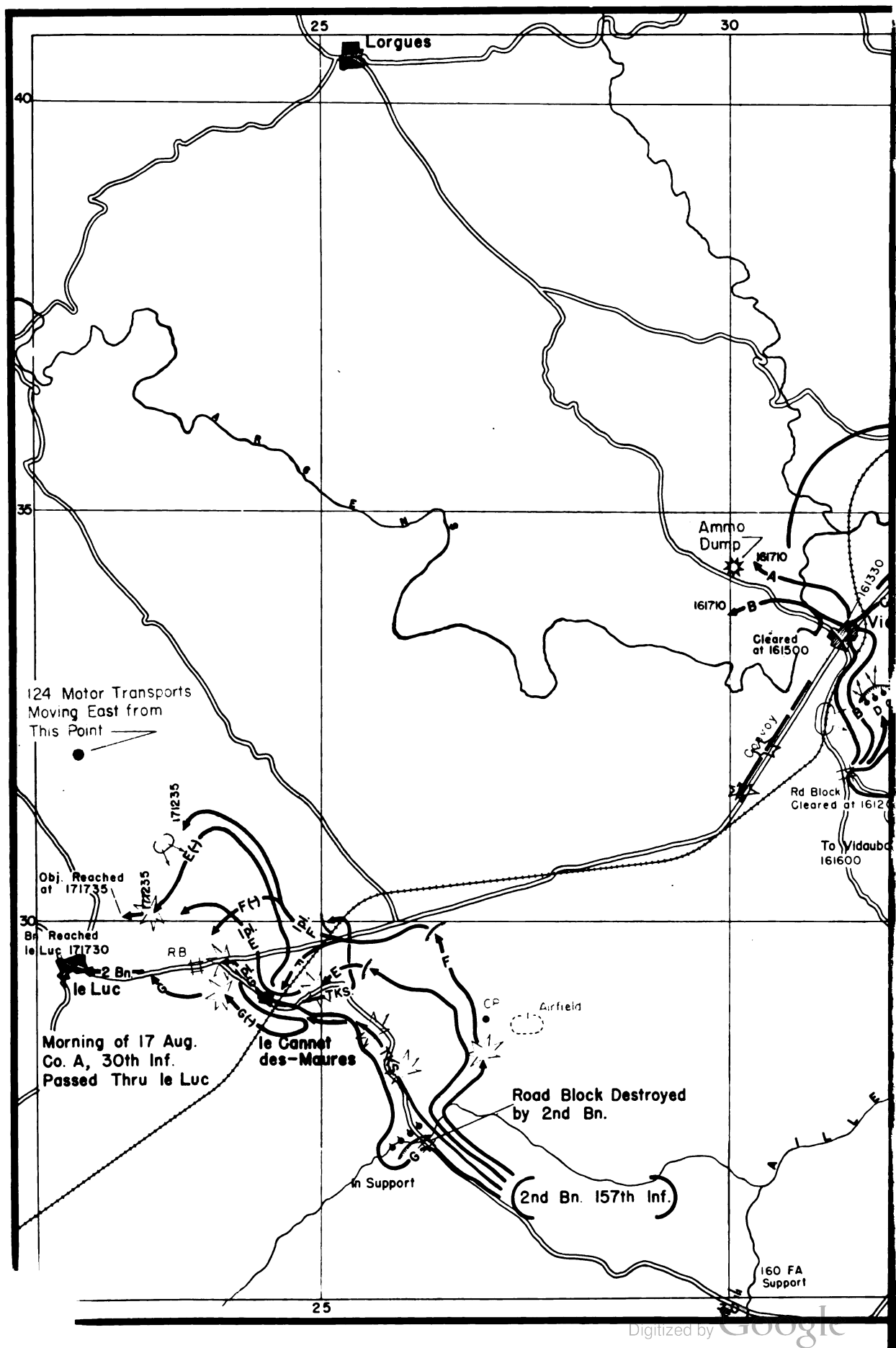
At Delta Blue Beach (263-C) the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, landed without opposition and had only slight difficulty in scaling the sea wall. However, the four amphibious tanks from the 191st Tank Battalion were put out of action by mines on the beach when they attempted to land abreast before lanes had been swept. On Delta Yellow Beach only one tank was lost, since a different strategy was followed. A single tank proceeded inland across the beach, while the others fired on targets

from the waterline until a path was cleared. Later the personnel of the immobilized tanks procured standard tanks and continued in the advance.

After securing the beach the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, advanced east and north to the high ground overlooking St. Aygulf. Elements moving along the coast road drew heavy fire from enemy strongpoints, but tanks and tank destroyers were able to neutralize these defenses. By dark of D-Day the battalion had come up to the town of St. Aygulf, and at daylight the next morning the Battalion Commander ordered an attack, B Company moved up from the south and C Company, by means of a flanking movement, seized the high ground to the north. As the attack developed, B Company encountered stiff resistance and asked for tank as well as naval gunfire support. Two tanks were knocked out by enemy action, but the combined fire power of the company and its supporting elements finally drove the enemy from his positions. While this fight was in progress, B Company moved in and occupied St. Aygulf.

The 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry, landed on Delta Yellow Beach (263-B), the Division center. Amphibious tanks began firing as soon as their tracks touched the ground. Four enemy pillboxes on the beach were immediately destroyed, but one tank was lost when it hit a mine. The battalion moved across the beach, suffering only four or five casualties, assembled, and then moved inland to high ground. During the afternoon the 2nd Battalion was ordered to advance north to Vidauban.

At H plus one the 3rd Battalion, 180th Infantry, landed on Delta Blue Beach (263-C), following the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion advanced inland from the beach toward high ground. At first no contact was made with the enemy, but observers soon located Germans in vehicles and on bicycles moving toward a hill which dominated the area overlooking the Delta beaches. A running fight with small arms and mortars developed. The enemy was driven back, losing 12 killed and 30 captured; and the hill was occupied by dark of D-Day. Patrolling continued throughout the night of 15-16 August, and at daylight the battalion continued its advance toward Roquebrune.



General Eagles, 45th Division commander, landed at 1100 hours on D-Day. Shortly afterwards the remaining regiment, the 179th Infantry, in reserve, debarked on Delta Green Beach (263-A) and assembled in the rear of the beach area. General Truscott, VI Corps Commander, came ashore during the afternoon. Since the other two regiments were making rapid progress against light resistance, the 179th did not see action until D plus one. The division advanced inland 15 August with comparative ease and rapidity. By 2300 hours reconnaissance troops had come within two miles of Le Muy and had contacted the airborne troops.

Personnel losses of the division during D-Day give an indication as to the ease with which the landing and initial advance were made. The 157th Infantry suffered 12 casualties, with only three of this number killed. The 180th Infantry had one officer and eight enlisted men killed and one officer and 48 enlisted men wounded. The 179th saw no action and suffered no losses. The total casualties for the entire division, including attached units, were two officers and 107 enlisted men. During the same period 205 prisoners were taken.

On D plus one the enemy was unable to take any kind of firm defensive action, and the 45th Division continued to advance. Except for small pockets of resistance consisting of antitank guns and uncoordinated infantry groups, there was no opposition of any importance.

The 40th Engineer Beach Group on the Delta beaches did not encounter the difficulties that were found on the Alpha beaches. The 1st Battalion Beach Group landed with the 157th Regimental Combat Team and initially operated Delta Red and Delta Green Beaches (263-A). Obstacles erected by the enemy to impede or prevent the advance of the infantry were quickly reduced. A line of concertina wire was gapped and a sea wall three feet thick breached. By the use of Navy pontoon causeways and five motorized cranes LCTs and LCMs were continuously unloaded, and this beach provided the principal source of supply for the 45th Division until D plus four. Immediately behind the beaches, dumps for all classes of supplies were established and operated. DUKWs were utilized until regular trucks became available, both for the unloading of ships and for land transportation.

The 3rd Battalion Beach Group, supporting the 180th Regimental Combat Team, landed on Delta Yellow Beach (263-B) and Delta Blue Beach (263-C). Here the gradient was sufficient for landing craft to come directly up the beach so that unloading could be accomplished on dry ground. Limited supplies for the immediate support of the infantry were stored in dumps behind the beaches; but, since Delta Blue Beach was small with difficult exits, it was closed on D plus one after the opening of Beach 263 on the Gulf of St. Tropez.

At H plus 11 hours the 2nd Battalion Beach Group of the 40th Engineer Regiment landed behind schedule on Alpha Yellow Beach (261). The Beach Group assisted the 36th Engineers in clearing mines and booby traps from the area and then moved inland to arrive at Beach 262 and St. Tropez. Battalion troops cleared the port of St. Tropez and opened berthing space for seven LCTs. After clearing lanes through a mine field behind Beach 262 to the west of St. Tropez, they opened berthing space for six LCMs, 19 LCIs, five LCTs, and a solid landing lane for DUKWs. This beach, now designated Delta Red Beach number 2, had the largest capacity in the area with dumps and depots conveniently located nearby.

During D-Day alone more than 33,000 troops and 3,000 vehicles were unloaded over the Delta beaches, the only hindrance being scattered mortar fire during the morning. On D plus one the enemy attempted to interfere with unloading operations, when a flight of five Ju 88s dropped antipersonnel bombs in the vicinity of Ste. Maxime. Antiaircraft units destroyed one of these raiders and drove the others off. However, some casualties were caused by the bombers.

A landing strip for artillery observation planes was rapidly constructed on the beach by the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion. Other engineer troops cleared and widened supply roads, removed mines, filled craters, blasted obstacles, and built other landing strips on the St. Tropez peninsula to make the area into a suitable base for handling supplies. By evening of D plus two these improvised ports had landed 53,360 troops and 6,818 vehicles and had handled 5,172 tons of miscellaneous supplies.

At the close of D plus one the 45th Division had finished mopping up enemy resistance in the Delta area and had reached all points on the "Blue Line". All the Division's missions had been accomplished and 929 prisoners taken. Three officers and 229 enlisted casualties were reported. Contact with the other divisions on the flanks was being maintained, and the 1st Airborne Task Force was met in the interior. All Delta beaches were cleared and operating effectively. The Seventh Army's center was secure and the build-up progressing satisfactorily.

Camel Force



MAJ. GEN. JOHN E. DAHLQUIST
". . . securing the right flank . . ."

The 36th Infantry Division, Camel Force, commanded by Major General Dahlquist, had the initial mission of securing the right flank of the invasion beaches. The designated Camel area extended from St. Aygulf Point on the right flank of the 45th Division area along the coast line to Theoule-sur-Mer on the Gulf of Napoule. Inland it stretched 20 miles along the right bank of the Argens River, including the important road junction and town of Frejus, Puget-sur-Argens, and Le Muy; and on the right the high ground of the Esterel Forest. The coastal area included the spacious, sandy, but

heavily fortified, Beach 264-A at the mouth of the Argens River. This beach was designated Camel Red Beach, and plans called for its reduction at H plus six by land assault from the rear and frontal assault by sea. Camel Green Beach (264-B) lay to the west of Cape Drammont and was considered large enough only for initial operations. Camel Yellow Beach (265) on the Rade d'Agay was also scheduled for reduction from the rear. On the extreme right flank of the invasion coast Camel Blue Beach (265-A) at an inlet near Point Antheor was small and not well suited for major landing operations.

Although the Camel assault area was considered to be strategically important because it offered a suitable entrance into the interior

by way of the Argens River Valley, it nevertheless presented certain obstacles. The principle beach, 264-A, at the mouth of the Argens River, was considered too strongly fortified for an initial assault and therefore was not used. The other two beaches were small and could hardly be called beaches in the technical sense of the word. They consisted of narrow strips of rocky shale between the water and steep embankments.

The initial mission of the division was to assault Camel Green Beach (264-B) and Camel Blue Beach (265-A) and to make a land assault on Camel Red Beach (264-A) at Z-Hour (H plus six) from each flank. The division was then to seize Agay, St. Raphael, and Frejus and push inland to Le Muy. It was also to be responsible for protecting the right flank of the assault area by establishing a defensive line from Fayence to La Napoule in the mountainous terrain west of Cannes. On 20 August this force was to be relieved by the 1st Airborne Division. At the same time the 36th Infantry Division was to be prepared to advance on Corps order to the northwest after reaching the "Blue Line" in zone.

Because of the limited sizes of the beaches selected for the initial assault, plans called for a landing of two battalions of the 141st Regimental Combat Team abreast on Camel Green Beach and the other battalion on Camel Blue Beach. The mission of the 141st Infantry was to destroy the enemy force occupying the area around the Rade d'Agay and then move north to a line generally west through Theoule-sur-Mer. The regiment was to protect the right flank of the division until relieved by the 1st Airborne Task Force. Initially the 143rd Infantry was to land over the beaches cleared by the 141st, pass through the 141st Infantry, and continue on its mission of clearing the coast and capturing the town of St. Raphael. The 142nd Infantry Regiment was to land over beaches cleared by the 141st in the event that landings at St. Raphael were impossible.

The Camel convoy arrived in the transport zone in the early morning of 15 August. For over an hour the Navy had been shelling the beaches from battleships and cruisers. The scheduled bombing of the beaches by the Air Corps had to be partially cancelled because of

overcast weather along the coast. Shallow-draft minesweepers swept lanes to within 500 yards of Camel Green and Blue Beaches, and small boats acting as markers took up positions along these cleared lanes. Assault troops crouched low in their landing craft as boat serials formed and headed for the shore. Ahead of the first wave were rocket ships mounting tiers of rocket launchers. As these drew within firing range of the beach, they discharged their rockets in the defenses.

Advancing at full speed, the assault craft approached the beaches in the immediate wake of the rocket ships. At H-Hour the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 141st Infantry, grounded their landing craft on the rocky shale of Camel Green Beach; the troops rushed forward in the face of slight machine gun, small arms, and antiaircraft fire. At almost the same time the 1st Battalion struck Camel Blue Beach under concentrated enemy fire. The Germans directed the fire of their antitank guns upon the assault boats and made several direct hits, causing casualties.

At 0805 hours elements from the 753rd Tank Battalion with eight amphibious tanks were floated 4,000 yards offshore from Camel Green Beach. As they came under heavy fire from the beach, a German antitank gun damaged the canvas of one, flooding the engine compartment. However, the tank was close enough to shore to get in without sinking. After beaching, the other tanks moved inland to positions 600 yards from the beach. As enemy opposition had almost ceased in the area, the amphibious tanks were stripped of flotation equipment and made ready for cross-country fighting.

The 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry, after clearing the right half of Camel Green Beach, attacked north to swing around the coastal road and make contact with the 1st Battalion, which had landed successfully on Camel Blue Beach. A road block was placed across the coastal highway, and the high ground northwest of the Rade d'Agay occupied. By 1000 hours the village of Drammont and the cape south of it had been taken. Two hours later the battalion was attacking from the southwest in the direction of the village of Agay.

During the night of 15-16 August the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, made a slow advance along the coast road toward Theoule,

since it was retarded by numerous pillboxes which had to be reduced. On the following day it captured Theoule-sur-Mer, moved north along the highway during the evening, destroyed road and railway bridges, and established a defensive position near La Napoule. That afternoon they had found the survivors of the French Marine demolition group (Rosie Force) and evacuated their wounded.

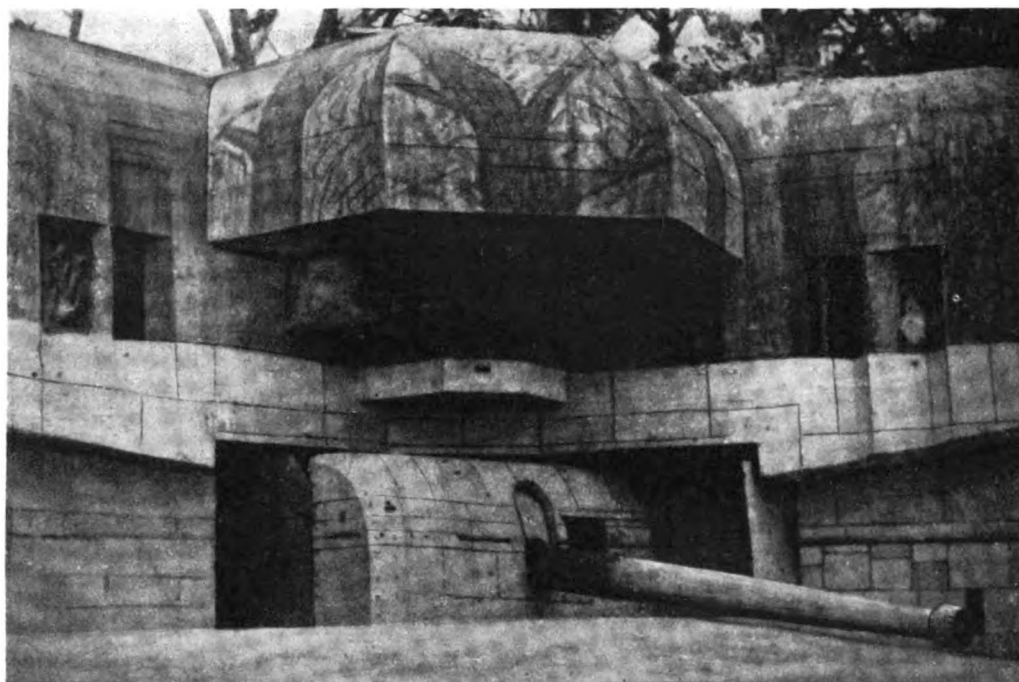
Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry, had cleared the left half of Camel Green Beach, destroyed all enemy strong points on the western end, and advanced down the coastal road 400 yards to establish a roadblock and occupy high ground overlooking the beach. Thus the 141st Infantry, now in strength and supported by tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery, had reduced the fortifications of the Agay area and had moved rapidly north and northeast toward its major objective; to establish and defend roadblocks, one north of Theoule-sur-Mer on the coastal highway and another west of Le Planestel, midway on the highway between Frejus and Cannes.

The 143rd Regimental Combat Team landed over Camel Green Beach in a column of battalions, 1st Battalion at 0945 hours, 2nd Battalion at 1000 hours, and 3rd Battalion at 1035 hours. The 1st Battalion moved forward to occupy high ground northwest of the beach. When relieved by the 3rd Battalion, the 1st moved toward the northwest of St. Raphael to assault the town. The 2nd Battalion moved up to attack the town from the east and with the aid of tanks and tank destroyers fought its way through a strongly fortified roadblock.

As a part of the mission of cleaning out the waterfront, E Company attacked from the rear 21 known enemy pillboxes, which were in position to fire into the harbor area. Meanwhile G and F Companies were working their way into St. Raphael from the southeast. Their attack was supported by naval gunfire and by several tanks and tank destroyers which had previously been attached to the 2nd Battalion.

The 142nd Regimental Combat Team was scheduled to make a delayed assault at Z-Hour (H plus six) over Camel Red Beach. This was to be the last and probably the most difficult assault in the entire

target area. The Navy reloaded rocket craft and prepared for a landing on the H-Hour scale. General Dahlquist had already gone ashore at 1000 hours.



COAST DEFENSE GUN AND CAMOUFLAGED BLOCKHOUSE ON
CAMEL BEACH

"... enemy pillboxes which were in position to fire into the harbor area . . ."

The softening of Camel Red Beach was an important task and a heavy concentration of fire was brought to bear. At 1100 hours minesweepers moved forward to sweep lanes through the Gulf of Frejus; but as they approached the beach, they were heavily shelled and forced to retire. It was apparent that the beach needed more softening, and a flight of 93 B-24s came over the beach and dropped 187 tons of bombs. Fifteen minutes later the minesweepers started back toward the beach. At 1700 yards offshore they met a heavy artillery barrage but with difficulty managed to sweep to within 500 yards of shore. Naval fire support ships then took over and hammered the defenses with shell fire.

Under this covering fire two demolition units with scout boats and 12 explosive drones were sent in. These also met heavy enemy fire.

Meanwhile the 142nd Infantry, in more than 100 assault craft, waited for the signal to land. At two minutes before Z-Hour the rocket ships let go their fire on the beach, but still no orders came to attack. It became apparent that something had gone wrong with the radio-controlled drone boats. Only three had exploded as planned, two grounded on the beach without exploding, one circled off the beach out of control, one exploded on the extreme left flank, two were boarded and put out of action, and one was sunk by gunfire from a destroyer when it reversed course and endangered the assembled assault boats. Two drones were never released because of the fear that they might run wild. It was now after 1400 hours, and the infantry was still waiting to come in.

The Beach Assault Commander radioed a report of the situation to Rear Admiral Lewis, commander of Task Force 87, and recommended that the assault be carried out at 1430 hours. The Admiral, however, ordered that the alternate plan of landing over Camel Green Beach be put into effect. The change in plan was relayed to the assault boats by radio and megaphone, and the fleet of small craft turned right to land the entire regiment over Camel Green Beach without loss. The above decision was made without the knowledge of General Dahlquist, who could not be reached on shore in time; but at 1740 hours he sent the following message to Admiral Lewis:

I appreciate your prompt action in changing plan when obstacles could not be breached. Expect to take Red Beach tonight, no matter how late. Opposition irritating but not too tough so far.

The chief objective of the 142nd Regimental Combat Team was to take the town of Frejus by night of D-Day. The delay in landing plus the ten-mile march from Camel Green Beach to the Frejus area put the regiment behind schedule. Moving out from the beach after its landing at 1532 hours, the 1st Battalion took the lead and advanced along the railroad to Agay, where it turned west astride a secondary road and headed toward Frejus. Flank guards of company strength were out on either side to comb the wooded hills, while a platoon of four tanks

spearheaded the column on the road. The 2nd Battalion and 3rd Battalion of the 142nd Infantry followed as the main body.

The march was unopposed, but two small groups of enemy were cleaned out of resort hotels along the route. At nightfall the 1st Battalion, 142nd Infantry, reached the high ground northeast of Frejus. During the night of D-Day the regiment prepared for an assault on the town.

Elements of the 143rd Regimental Combat Team were by this time engaged at St. Raphael, the 3rd Battalion attacking from the right flank and the 2nd from the left. L Company, 3rd Battalion, became engaged in a fire fight with the enemy on high ground east of St. Raphael, while Companies I and K crossed the high ground to the northeast and closed in on the town. One enemy self-propelled gun opened up on the leading company, but was knocked out by a bazooka. Patrols reported enemy troops and guns inside St. Raphael. These troops were reinforcements being marched across the town from the northwest to try to stop the advance of the 2nd Battalion along the coast. Companies I and K continued to attack and engaged the enemy with small arms fire during the night of 15-16 August.

The next morning these two companies and two from the 2nd Battalion moved through St. Raphael clearing out most of the resistance. Meanwhile L Company overcame the enemy on the hill east of the town, taking 260 prisoners. By this time contact had been established by elements of the 45th and 36th Divisions, and their connecting flanks were secure.

The 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry, had moved northwest around St. Raphael and joined the 3rd at the road junction north of town. The two battalions moved out on D plus one to clean up Camel Red Beach and the airport; they captured several high ranking enemy officers and much materiel. Prior to this time the 2nd Battalion, supported by tanks and tank destroyers, had completed the mopping up of the St. Raphael area.

The 142nd Infantry Regiment was at the same time engaged in the battle for Frejus. During the night of D-Day the 3rd Battalion

had passed through the 1st, moved on to Highway Seven at Camp Gallieni, and sent advance patrols into Frejus. At daylight street fighting broke out. Company L led 3rd Battalion attacks, as stubborn enemy opposition was overcome during the morning. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion, following the 3rd, had stirred up a strongpoint of resistance at Camp Gallieni. A storm of flares, small arms fire, and mortar fire broke out from the heights. Elements of the regiment were engaged at Camp Gallieni during most of D plus one, and the 2nd Battalion pushed west to its original objectives, high ground south of Camp des Cais and the Camp itself, to secure the area northwest of Frejus. By mid-afternoon on 16 August enemy resistance in the entire Frejus area was



TROOPS OF THE 36TH DIVISION ENTERING FREJUS 16 AUGUST

" . . . at daylight streetfighting broke out By midafternoon the troops were mopping up . . . "

broken; the rest was mopping-up. The battalions, having completed their various assigned missions, assembled west of Frejus and moved to Puget.

The 3rd Battalion, 142nd Infantry, entered Puget late in the afternoon of D plus one and before nightfall had run into an enemy antitank strongpoint 1,200 yards beyond the town. During the night strong naval gunfire aided the artillery in shelling the position. An American paratrooper taken prisoner by this enemy group managed to escape during the shelling and, on reaching the American lines, reported that most of the enemy had spiked their guns and fled. On the morning of 17 August the Regimental Combat Team shuttled by battalions through Le Muy (which had been previously taken by the 509th Paratroopers) and arrived at Trans-en-Provence, the division zone on the "Blue Line".

The assault landing of the 36th Division had been successfully accomplished, although an alternate plan had been used. Casualty rates were low and the advance rapid, in spite of many doggedly defended strongpoints and roadblocks. By D plus two the division had cleared the Camel beaches and advanced to the Corps-designated "Blue Line", driving the enemy from a stretch of the coast which included the largest town and most important road junction in that target area.

Unloading operations on the Camel beaches during D-Day took place primarily on only one beach. In the initial landing on Camel Green Beach a small party from the 540th Engineer Beach Group came in with the first wave of infantry to reconnoiter the beach area. Largely because of the stony nature of the beach no mines were found, and no Sommerfelt matting was deemed necessary. Work was immediately begun on the construction of a two-lane exit on the right flank of the beach. Half an hour later, when the beach obstacle team and mine clearing detail landed, they were put to work on road construction, since there was no demolition work to be done. The engineer weapons sections assisted the infantry in reducing enemy resistance on the flanks. In spite of periodic shellings by enemy guns, the unloading of ships progressed satisfactorily. Battalion after battalion landed dry and passed over the beach.

During D-Day Camel Green Beach was perhaps the busiest place on the entire invasion coast. There were not only more troops landing in a smaller area than elsewhere, but there was also considerable air and ground resistance. At 2043 hours four enemy DO 217s

approached the Camel area at 15,000 feet. After circling they descended to about 8,000 feet and dropped their bombs. One glider bomb destroyed an LST 600 yards offshore, resulting in 40 casualties and the loss of vehicles and ammunition. *THE LST 292 WAS THE VICTIM*

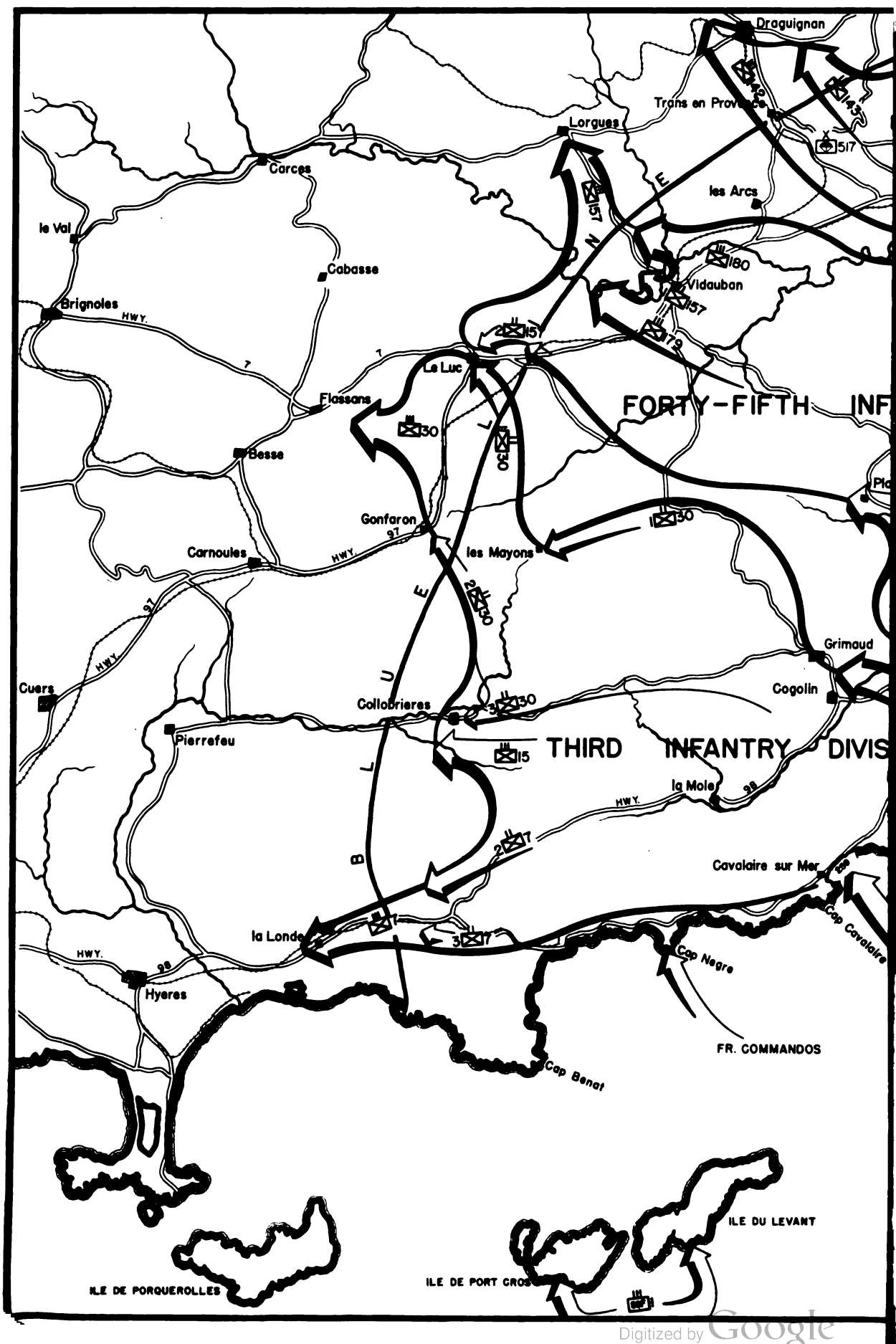
During D-Day initial depots and supply dumps were temporarily established near Camel Green Beach. More than 2,790 vehicles and 17,390 troops were debarked. The 56th Medical Battalion, attached to the Beach Group, set up collecting, clearing, and aid stations, and evacuated 147 casualties that day. At the end of D-Day, military police had evacuated 94 prisoners to the far shore and were guarding many more in improvised pens.



EVACUATION OF WOUNDED FROM BEACH TO HOSPITAL SHIP VIA LCVPs

"... the beaches were soon neutralized and put into orderly, efficient operation ..."

Unloading continued at Camel Green Beach, but it was not until D plus three that Camel Red Beach was finally cleared of mines



and put into operation. Meanwhile Camel Green Beach continued to operate on a 24-hour basis and sent a steady flow of troops and supplies inland, at the same time evacuating prisoners and casualties to the ships. At the close of D plus two more than 5,000 vehicles and 30,000 troops had landed, and over 2,800 prisoners and 800 casualties had been evacuated.

END

The Initial Objective Achieved

The assault on the southern coast of France had been a complete success. At the close of D-Day all the combat elements of VI



OVER-RUNNING GERMAN COASTAL DEFENSES

"... the assault on the southern coast of France was a complete success. At the close of D Day all the combat elements of VI Corps had landed, and the exploitation of a weak and confused enemy was in rapid progress . . ."

Corps had landed, and the exploitation of a weak and confused enemy was in rapid progress. By midnight 15 August 2,041 prisoners of war

had been taken, and corps casualties had been almost negligible. The enemy could offer only scattered resistance. The German Air Force had been weak and ineffective. Enemy reinforcements never arrived in the



D DAY CASUALTIES: A GERMAN SOLDIER, A FRENCH WOMAN,
A U. S. SERGEANT

"... the assault casualties were almost negligible ..."

beach area, and no large scale counter-attacks were launched. The three divisions advanced inland according to plan, already ahead of their time schedule.

During D-Day the Seventh Army Command Post continued operation aboard ship. At 1100 hours on 16 August General Patch, Vice Admiral Hewitt, and Admiral Lemmonier, the French Naval Commander, went ashore from the USS *Catocin* to visit VI Corps Headquarters.

After an inspection of the Alpha area, the Seventh Army Commander returned aboard ship and conferred with General Wilson

and Admiral Cunningham. They assured him of all possible support from Theater resources. During the afternoon of D plus one General Patch conferred with Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, Admiral Hewitt, and Admiral Lemmonier aboard the USS *Wakefield* and later went ashore to visit the Camel area. Accompanied by General Dahlquist, he drove through the newly-liberated towns of St. Raphael and Frejus. There were numerous demonstrations of joy by the French population. *END*

Seventh Army Headquarters debarked during the afternoon of D plus one and established its initial command post in a resort hotel west of St. Tropez. At the first staff conference ashore, held at 1400 hours on 17 August, the Chief of Staff announced plans for changes in



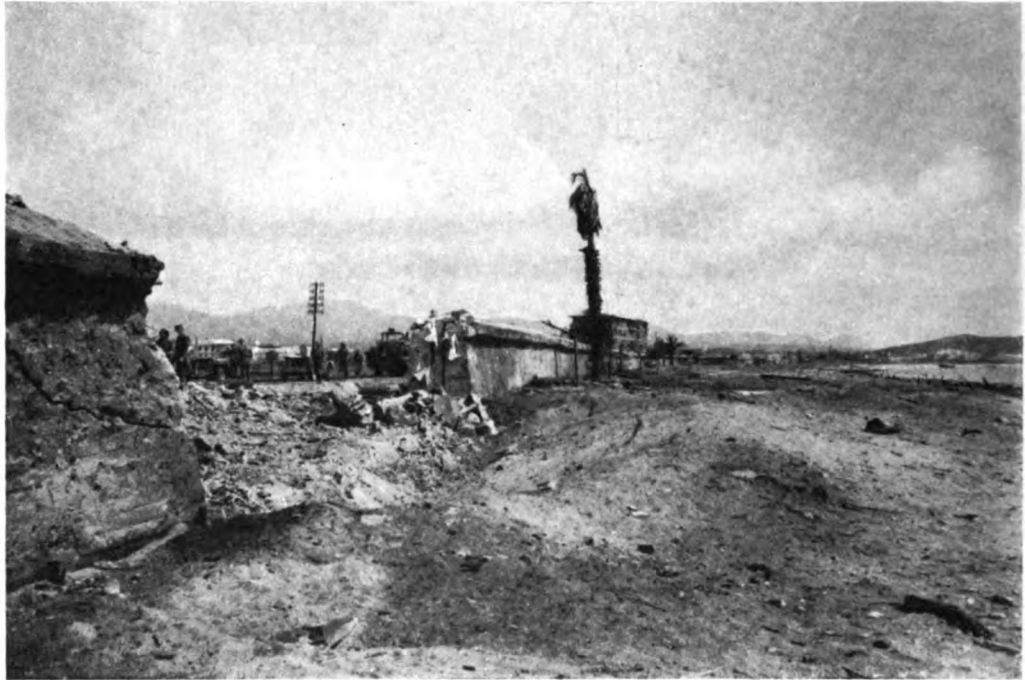
AN AMERICAN PATROL MOVING THROUGH ST. RAPHAEL

"... in many ways the operation exceeded even the most optimistic expectations . . . Three divisions were already ahead of their time schedule . . ."

shipping priorities after D plus 20, in order to bring in more rapidly new units which could assist in the full exploitation of a confused enemy. After the conference General Somervell and Mr. Patterson, Assistant

Secretary of War, arrived at Army Headquarters and conferred with General White, the Chief of Staff.

The assault phase of the invasion was now complete. The combat battalions, marching as rapidly as possible and riding on tanks, tank destroyers, and ammunition trucks, reached their designated positions in the "Blue Line" zone. Supplies were arriving steadily;



AN ANTI-TANK WALL ON THE BEACH NEAR S.T. RAPHAEL

"... whatever plans the enemy may have had for defending the invasion coast were not effectively put into execution . . ."

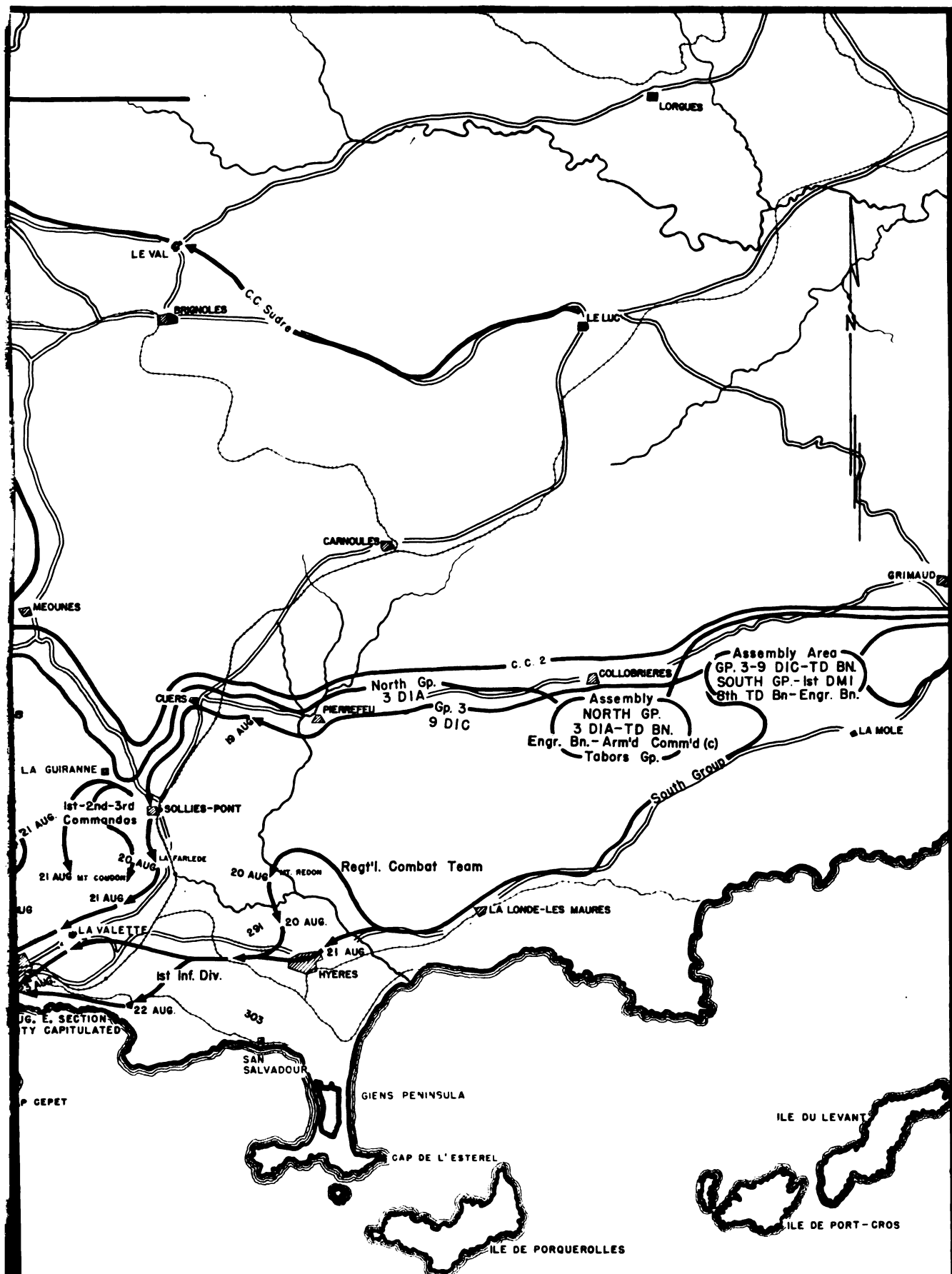
Seventh Army took over supply functions from the sub-task forces, and the Beach Control Group came into being. The enemy clung to some fortified points and fought stubbornly, but the Americans crushed him and continued their advance. During the assault phase the operation had gone "according to plan", but in many ways it had exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. Whatever plans the enemy may have had for defending the invasion coast were not effectively put into execution.

Before midnight of 16-17 August telephonic instructions were issued by the Corps commander to the 3rd, 36th, and 45th Divisions to assemble various combat and service elements by 1600 hours on 17 August in the vicinity of Le Muy to form a provisional Armored Group (Task Force Butler). The time had arrived to exploit the initial advantage of the Seventh Army by a rapid movement inland.



GENERAL PATCH INSPECTING FFI MAQUIS IN ST. TROPEZ

" . . . The time had arrived to exploit the initial advantage of the Seventh Army in a rapid movement inland . . . "



CHAPTER VII

The Capture of Toulon and Marseille

THE rapid development of the beachhead in the Seventh Army's invasion of southern France and the scattered disposition of German troops indicated that coming operations for *DRAGOON* would be a pursuit, a race to the north up the Rhone Valley, an eventual junction with Allied forces in the Paris basin, and the entrapment of German forces pulling out of France. But before a full exploitation to the north could be realized it was essential to have the port cities of Marseille and Toulon. That was the mission assigned to the French army of General De Lattre De Tassigny with full Allied naval and air support.

French Army B

At 2000 hours on 16 August French units of the Seventh Army began landing over beaches already cleared by the American VI Corps in the St. Tropez-Cavalaire area. Army B, as the French forces were designated, was to move from its assembly area through VI Corps and advance rapidly to the west against Toulon and Marseille. It was necessary to maintain contact with VI Corps during the operation and to integrate timing as closely as possible with the American unit.

Army B was made up of two corps divided into seven divisions, two of which were armored. However, only II Corps with supporting troops would be available for early operations, since I Corps would not begin landing until D plus 20. The French II Corps had four divisions. The 1st Infantry and the 3rd Algerian Divisions came ashore on 16 August. One combat command of the 1st Armored Division came in the next day; another of its units, Combat Command Sudre, had landed on D plus 1 as an attachment to the American VI Corps. On 18 August

the 9th Colonial Infantry Division, two groups of Tabors, and special troops began pouring over the beaches to give General De Lattre de Tassigny the major portion of his II Corps to maneuver against the enemy.

By this time most of the first echelon personnel, but only half the vehicles and heavy equipment had landed. In view of the developing situation, the Americans pushing ahead against relatively weak resistance and the slow progress of landing equipment, the French Commanding General decided to make certain modifications of pre-D-Day plans to expedite French participation in the overall Seventh Army picture. Troops were sent ahead to regroup in a forward area between La Mole and Collobrieres instead of waiting to assemble near the Cavalaire beaches.

The lay of the land between the beaches and Marseille influenced plans for attack. Wooded hills confined movement along two east-west roads. Highway 98 followed the coast from La Londe through Hyeres and Toulon to the great port city. The other axis passed through Collobrieres, Sollies-Pont, Le Camp, and Aubagne to Marseille. Various north-south roads linked these two lateral routes to permit the movement of troops from one to the other. Fortified heights north of the cities of Hyeres, Toulon, and Marseille were the main land defenses to be broken.

The enemy who had been unable to prevent the securing of a beachhead apparently could do little to contain it. However, by holding Toulon and Marseille it was possible at least to delay the exploitation of this initial success. It was expected that the German High Command would sacrifice its 242nd Division in Toulon and its 244th Division in Marseille to the last man to deny to Allied forces the use of modern deep water port facilities. Besides facing these two divisions the French command expected to meet elements of four others, including the mobile 11th Panzer Division coming from the Bordeaux-Toulouse area. The reoccupation of Toulon and Marseille would be a tremendous morale factor for the French and at the same time blast German hopes in southern France.

It remained for General De Lattre to convert strategy to tactics and for his troops to convert tactics to action. Outflanking and encirclement were the core of the tactical plan: first Hyeres, then Tou-

lon, then Marseille. Speed and flexibility were means to the end. Army B was divided into five tactical groups. The first group, made up of the 1st Infantry Division reinforced by tank destroyer and engineer battalions, was to strike along the southern road toward Hyeres. The second group, the 3rd Algerian Division supported by tank destroyers, engineers, and Tabors of Goums, was to follow the northern road toward Toulon. The Goumiers are native troops from Morocco, organized into Goums which are similar to companies and Tabors which are similar to battalions. The third group, the 9th Colonial Infantry Division, reinforced by a tank destroyer battalion, was to support either of the first two. Elements of the 1st Armored Division and a regiment of Algerian Spahis made up the fourth group to which was assigned the mission of covering the northern flank of the assault area. A fifth group including a battalion of Senegalese riflemen, a Battalion de Choc, and the Groupe de Commandos, which was to return to Army B control on 21 August, would be employed for special missions.

Hyeres

On 19 August the 1st Infantry Division reinforced moved out of its forward assembly area along the coast road to Hyeres. As the troops approached the town, enemy fire from antitank guns within Hyeres and heavy shelling from larger caliber guns in the Maurettes Mountains brought the advance to a sudden halt. This hill mass north of Hyeres, dominated by Mt. Redon, blocked the coast road and was strongly fortified. One regimental combat team was detached from the main body and sent northward to infiltrate and encircle these positions. By 20 August Hyeres was cut off from the north and east.

To complete the isolation of the town the 9th Colonial Division had attacked the enemy from the Collobrieres approach to drive him from the north-south axis, Sollies-Pont to La Farlede. On 20 August resistance was encountered at Sollies-Pont, but the Colonials outflanked the town through woods to the north with a battalion of infantry supported by artillery and tanks. After a sharp conflict Sollies-Pont was occupied and the road south through La Farlede cleared of the enemy. Hyeres was then cut off on the northwest and effectually isolated.

Meanwhile, the main body of the 1st Infantry Division pushed against Hyeres in a frontal assault from the east. The 4th Brigade attacked across the Gapeau River on the morning of 20 August but, after a slight penetration, was held up by heavy fire near the Golf Hotel north of the highway and on the outskirts of the city. Here the enemy had two antitank guns and three antiaircraft guns covering the eastern approaches. Infantry elements were withdrawn from the immediate area, and two battalions of 105mm and one battalion of 155mm artillery were ordered to neutralize the strongpoint.

At a point-blank range of less than 1,000 yards French artillery fired 1,000 rounds and registered more than 100 direct hits. In addition, Allied warships during the morning of 21 August fired over 200 shells into the town of Hyeres. One infantry battalion was now able to close in on the Golf Hotel. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting brought the battalion to within 50 yards of the strongpoint. At 1900 hours a bayonet charge was made in the face of heavy enemy fire and all resistance overcome. Many German dead were found and 140 prisoners taken.

As troops of the 1st Infantry Division passed through Hyeres on the Toulon road it was decided that one motorized battalion would be left behind to assist the French Forces of the Interior in mopping up isolated pockets. The rest of the division moved toward La Valette, where, with the 9th Colonial Infantry Division they could use similar technique and apply the same pressure against Toulon.

The island of Porquerolles southeast of Hyeres, and Giens, the long point of land reaching out toward the island, had been blasted by naval guns on 18, 19 and 21 August. The USS *Eberle* removed 140 Armenian prisoners from Porquerolles on 21 August and reported that a strongpoint of 150 Germans still remained. Two patrol boats guarded the island to prevent their escape. On the following day bombardment was continued. A white flag was raised on Porquerolles and at 1130 hours the USS *Omaha* accepted the surrender of the enemy garrison. Later the same day 190 Senegalese troops were landed as a detachment. The battery on Cap de l'Esterel, the eastern tip of the Giens Peninsula, remained active until 23 August when it also sent up a white flag. French troops were then landed on the peninsula against no resistance.

Toulon

The encirclement of Toulon had begun on 20 August, the day before the reduction of Hyeres. The 3rd Algerian Division and its supporting troops had left an assembly area near Collobrieres on 18 August and followed the inland route toward Marseille, by-passing to the north the town of Sollies-Pont, where the 9th Colonial Infantry Division engaged the enemy. By 19 August it had reached Meounes and split up into three groups.

The hills above Toulon rose in an arc, Mount Caumes north of the city dropping down south and a little east to Mount Faron, around



FORT de la CROIX FARON'S TYPICAL WINDING, HIGH WALLED WALKS
" . . . all three heights, Caumes, Faron, and Le Coudon, had been made into heavily fortified strongpoints . . . "

which the suburbs of Toulon had crowded, stretching east and a little north to Le Coudon. The rim of the cup pushed the city against the bay. All three heights, Caumes, Faron, and Le Coudon, had been made

into heavily fortified strongpoints. Besides these defenses north and east, St. Mandrier Peninsula south of the city bristled with guns.

The harbor defenses and the mountain strongholds were the outer ring of steel. The inner defenses of Toulon were also formidable. All approaches to the city were blocked by antitank obstacles, pillboxes, and mine fields. Defense zones had been set up with blockhouses and firing trenches well protected by wire and mines. All bridges and viaducts were prepared for demolition, and charges were placed in high earth banks to cause landslides. It was estimated that 60 heavy and 100 light guns were available to defend the city, and even guns from the sunken battleship *Province* were thought to have been moved ashore. Forts Ste. Catherine, d'Artigues, de Malbousquet, and Lamalgue among others within the city were known to be especially heavily fortified.

Near La Farlede the 9th Colonial Division had come under German artillery firing from Mt. Coudon. On 21 August the Groupe de Commandos, having returned to Army B control after the assault at Cap Negre and engagements west along the coast, and having approached against resistance by way of La Guiranne, moved forward to seize the heights of Le Coudon and destroy the enemy. Commando troops advanced toward their objective at 0800 hours and leading elements ran into small arms fire almost at once on the Coudon slopes. The ridge was fortified by five separate gun emplacements and a fort on the eastern peak. By noon one of the batteries had been overrun.

The 1st and 3rd Commandos, the assault battalions, came up against strong resistance at the Fort Est du Coudon. Close fighting continued for three hours during which time grenades and rocket guns hammered at the fort until it capitulated at 1700 hours. While the commandos were scaling the walls by rope to receive the surrender, Germans inside signaled by flare for their own artillery to begin firing. Heavy shells came in and caused several casualties among both captors and captured. After enemy firing had ceased, the commandos put a heavy mortar in position and were able to knock out two German 100 mm guns camouflaged in an orchard below.

After Mt. Faron had been taken by the Battalion de Choc on 22 August, the Groupe de Commandos moved out the following day

to mop up the area between the heights of Le Coudon and Mt. Faron. As troops made their way down the slopes, they heard firing back on the crest at Le Coudon. Apparently a group of Germans driven from La Valette by troops of the 9th Colonial Division were trying to infiltrate and recapture the fortifications. Orders were issued to hold Coudon at all costs, even at the expense of mopping up operations. The 2nd Commando Battalion was left to reinforce the 1st at the fort, while troops of the 3rd moved out on their original mission. On 24 August they drove the enemy from a series of rock quarries west of Le Coudon using mortar fire followed up by flame throwers. The defenders, fleeing toward La Valette, surrendered to the Senegalese.

In the meantime the 3rd Algerian Group north of Toulon had been subdivided into three smaller tactical groups named after their respective commanders, Linares, Bonjour, and Chapuis. Each had an average strength of about two battalions with attached reconnaissance elements. As the Algerian troops turned toward the enemy between the Meounes-Le Camp axis and the sea, the 1st Armored Division and supporting troops filled in on their north flank, pushed on toward Aix-en-Provence, and maintained liaison with the American 3rd Division.

Just west of Meounes the Linares group detached itself from the main body, turned south, and infiltrated through the Morieres Mountains to reach the village of Le Revest-les-Eaux. Here the watershed of the Morieres follows a deep gorge, the ravine of the Dardennes, which runs to the very heart of Toulon. This route was well defended by the dominating heights of Mt. Caumes to the northwest and Mt. Faron to the southeast. Colonel Linares' group, now reinforced by a Battalion de Choc, received orders from General De Monsabert, commander of the 3rd Algerian Division, to increase pressure on Toulon by reducing Faron heights.

This action was entrusted to the Battalion de Choc. The La Valette-Dardennes-Toulon road encircling Mt. Faron had already been cut by a roadblock set up near the Chateau de la Repelle; on 21 August Captain de Peretti de la Rocca had led Algerian troops against the German Chateau strongpoint and held the roadblock against two counter-attacks. Mt. Caumes had been neutralized the same day by the 3rd

Rifle Regiment of the Linares group. On 22 August the Battalion de Choc enveloped and climbed over Mt. Faron to capture the entire German garrison. Troops now filtered into Toulon through the Dardennes ravine. The enemy was surprised by this maneuver north of the city but lost no time in assembling his forces near the Poudriere (powder magazines) on the waterfront and launching violent counterattacks.

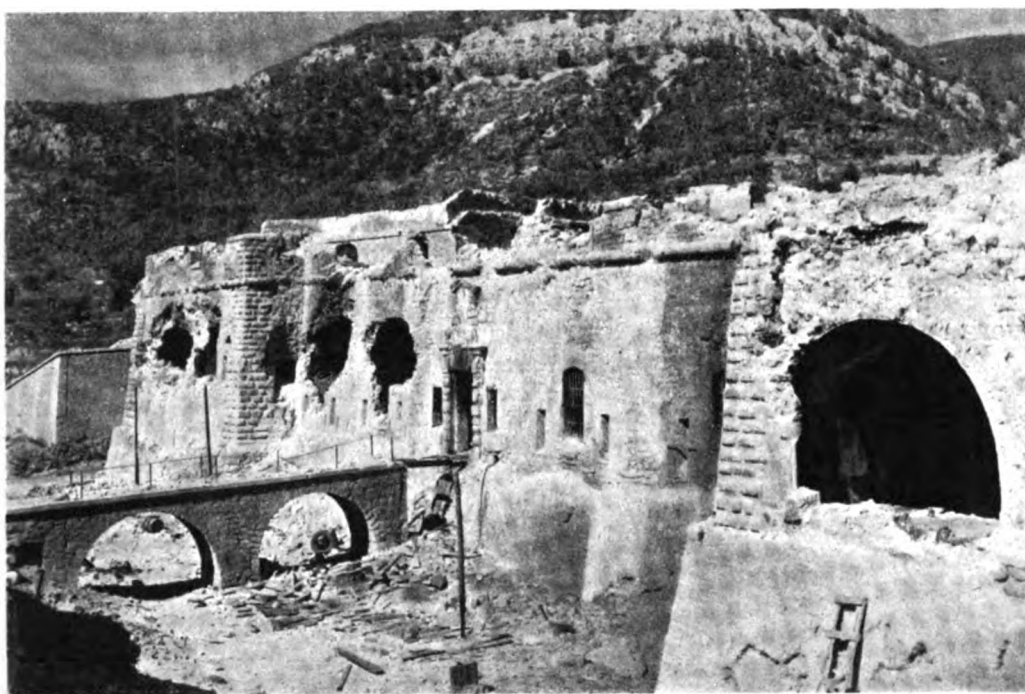
By the reduction of the three great mountain forts of Caumes, Faron, and Le Coudon the French had isolated Toulon from the north and had gained the topographical advantage of high ground looking down on the city. While this action was in progress, the 3rd Algerian Division minus the Linares group continued along the northern Marseille road through Signes and up to the nodal town of Le Camp by 20 August. Here the Germans blocked the north-south highway which led into the Toulon-Marseille coastal road. The Bonjour group was detached from the westward advance and sent to clear the roadblock. The detachment, then reinforced by a battalion of tank destroyers, pushed through Le Beausset to Ollioules in the suburbs of Toulon. The isolation of the city from the west became complete as soon as reconnaissance troops of the Bonjour group reached the sea at Bandol and placed tank destroyers across the coast road leading to Marseille.

By 23 August Toulon was actually under siege. Between 20 and 24 August the French had surrounded and isolated the city from three directions. The 9th Colonial Infantry Division and the Commandos had forced open the Sollies-Pont-La Farlede defile and occupied Le Coudon to make possible the westward advance of the 1st Infantry Division along the base of the Hyeres-La Farlede-La Valette triangle. On 23 August the 9th Colonial and the 1st Infantry Divisions ran up against the eastern gates of Toulon.

The German defenders of Toulon had received orders to fight to the last man. In spite of the hopelessness of their tactical situation the 242nd German Infantry Division resisted stubbornly and fanatically. From the four main bastions of Ste. Catherine, d'Artigues, de Malbousquet, and Lamague, within the city, the enemy directed well-aimed artillery and mortar fire against the attackers. Moreover, camouflaged blockhouses and pillboxes covered by well concealed mine fields made

infiltration tactics extremely difficult. Finally, 2,000 German sailors holding the St. Mandrier Peninsula engaged in heavy artillery duels with the French about the periphery of the city.

The complete occupation of Toulon required the combined efforts of the French Army, the XII Tactical Air Command, and the Western Naval Task Force. By land the French established a solid ring of six battalions of 155mm guns and an equal number of 105mm guns tight against Toulon. Observation posts on the heights above the city gave their fire great accuracy, and round after round crashed in on the defenders.



FORT D'ARTIQUES, TOULON

" . . . round after round crashed in on the defenders . . . "

The air force had concentrated its bombing on the St. Mandrier Peninsula to knock out artillery installations and to cut off the enemy from the mainland. Beginning on 18 August bombers swarmed the Toulon area, as 91 B-26s blasted St. Mandrier. The next day 71 bombers

returned with the same mission. On 20 August fighter-bombers continued the attack. Each carrying two 500 pound bombs, 121 P-47s hit the St. Mandrier installations, while B-26s dropped 161, 1,000 pound bombs. Enemy antiaircraft fire was accurate and intense; 28 aircraft were hit by flak and three destroyed. Good bomb patterns were achieved with possible direct hits. The next day planes sank small enemy craft in Toulon harbor. The XII Tactical Command returned to the Toulon area on 24 and 25 August to add a few final touches to the air bombardment pattern.

Meanwhile, the Western Naval Task Force gave support from the sea. On 19 August the FS *Lorraine*, USS *Nevada*, and USS *Augusta*, screened by smoke and covered by fighter planes, had fired 87 rounds on St. Mandrier and 124 rounds in Toulon with a direct hit on the French battleship *Strasbourg*. The attack was stepped up the following day; and enemy guns on St. Mandrier, at least one of the 340 mm size, shot back, firing about 60 rounds slowly and accurately at a 14 mile range. The FS *Fantasque* and FS *George Leygues* were hit by 155 mm shells, and the USS *Ericsson* was straddled. On 21 August coastal guns were less active, scoring near misses but no hits. The naval bombardment continued for eight successive days with rising intensity to the 26th of the month when cruisers closed to within five miles of the St. Mandrier fortress. All ships ceased fire at 1630 hours. Explosions and fires were observed. On 27 August a light bombardment on positions south of Toulon received no answering fire. The formal surrender of St. Mandrier the following day ended the resistance.

Through liaison shore groups, naval gun fire was also available to the advancing land forces for call on specific targets. The 1st Infantry Division moving up along the coast from Hyeres had met stubborn resistance at German pillbox positions on concentric defense lines from Le Mont des Oiseaux and San Salvador through Carqueiranne, Le Pradet, and La Garde, southeast of La Valette. The enemy defended fiercely, launching many counterattacks; and the French suffered heavy casualties. As division troops pushed on west, one battalion of the Foreign Legion besieged San Salvador for six hours on 22 August. Fire

from Allied warships was poured on the defenses. The battalion finally broke through and took seven officers and 340 enlisted men prisoner.

On the same day troops of the 9th Colonial Division were fighting at La Valette. The 6th Senegalese riflemen, led by Chef de Bataillon de Saint Germain, stormed the redoubt at La Platriere Ste. Anne and seized two pillboxes covering approaches to the town. Enemy resistance was beaten down only by constant assault.

Against the background of booming naval guns, troops of both divisions east of Toulon penetrated the city. By 1700 hours on 23 August advance elements had reached the center of Toulon. Major Victor Mirkin moved up with two tanks to the Military Arsenal in the Le Mourillon section of the city. He entered the arsenal and told the German commander that, unless he surrendered immediately, the fire of Allied warships would be brought down on the garrison. The commander capitulated, surrendering 17 officers and 800 enlisted men.

On the morning of 24 August enemy forts and strongpoints began to give up one after the other. At 0900 hours the Naval Arsenal gave up with 200 prisoners. At 1000 Fort Ste. Catherine surrendered, and at 1300 the German garrison at Fort St. Louis was ordered to spike its guns. Three other forts capitulated during the afternoon, and by dark organized resistance in the eastern part of Toulon came to an end. On this day alone the 1st Infantry Division had taken over 2,000 prisoners.

In spite of this early progress, pockets of resistance still held out in many parts of the city. The enemy held the dock area; and mopping up operations were intensified, particularly when a radio intercept indicated that the Germans had received orders to destroy all remaining port installations. Street fighting flared up at several points; it was particularly heavy in the quarters known as La Colette where the Germans were resisting from house to house.

While the last enemy strongpoints in the city were being overcome, French troops were also pushing southwest of Toulon down the Sicie Peninsula, which was studded with forts and pockets of Germans. During the day of 25 August surrender terms were discussed at many

of the fortifications and others were stormed. By 1900 hours Fort d'Artigues, northeast of La Colette, surrendered 20 officers and 200 soldiers. The Fort de Six-Fours in the middle of the Sicie neck agreed to capitulate effective 1200 the next day. After a sharp fight Fort de Malbousquet in Toulon gave up by 2200 hours.

On 26 August heavy artillery fire was brought down on La Mitre in the Mourillon section of Toulon. Before noon this last enemy center of resistance within the city surrendered. The Six-Fours Commandant, having blown up ammunition depots at 0900, completed the terms of capitulation, giving up about 500 prisoners. By late afternoon other defenses on the Sicie Peninsula collapsed. Only St. Mandrier remained in enemy hands.

At 1745 hours the following day General Magnan, commanding the 9th Colonial Division, stopped all artillery which had been firing counterbattery on the eight enemy gun positions still intact on St. Mandrier and requested cessation of naval fire. Negotiations were begun for the surrender of the garrison. It was agreed that capitulation would become effective at 0600 hours on 28 August. The entire garrison was taken prisoner including the commanding officer of the Toulon defenses, Admiral Ruhfus. At 1000 hours the same morning General De Lattre De Tassigny made his formal entry into Toulon. On 28 August Marseille also fell.

Marseille

The movement of French Army B against Marseille had begun as early as 20 August when the Chapuis group of the 3rd Algerian Division pushed west above Toulon. Units of the 1st Armored Division, now including Combat Command Sudre, which had been screening the French Army's northern flank and maintaining contact with the American 3rd Division in and about Brignoles and along Highway 7 toward Aix-en-Provence, also turned toward Marseille. Together the two French Divisions advanced in a single operation. The maneuver against Marseille was to be similar to that used against Hyeres and Toulon, rapid encirclement, isolation, and pressure from all sides.

The natural defenses of Marseille were not as formidable as those of Toulon. However, the Etoile Mountains ran in a chain from Aubagne to Aix and gave some protection northeast of the city. Within Marseille the heights of Notre Dame de la Garde were well manned and well fortified, and in the port area enemy artillery and mortars covered all the approaches. In the bay the islands of Ratonneau and Pomegues guarded the sea lanes with strong forts.

In addition to offshore mine fields, booms, nets, and submarine detectors, blockships were anchored at strategic places in the harbor to be sunk on short notice and thus hamper full use of port facilities. Shore



SCUTTLED SHIP BLOCKING ENTRANCE TO THE PORT OF MARSEILLES

" . . . blockships were anchored, by the enemy, at strategic places in the harbor . . . to hamper full use of port facilities . . . "

defenses included heavy coastal batteries and several railroad spurs built specifically to handle railroad guns with a caliber up to 15 inches. Mines were planted along the beaches as well as on all roads leading

inland. It was estimated that for anti-aircraft protection the city had 170 guns of all calibers supplemented by searchlights and barrage balloons.

Since Marseille did not have the same system of well integrated hill-top fortresses as did Toulon, the Germans had placed greater stress on an elaborate defense of the suburbs to block off all entries to the heart of the city. On all main roads branching out from the city's hub were roadblocks and antitank mines. At Marignane, northwest of Marseille, the most important airfield in the area was defended by several batteries of antiaircraft guns and antitank ditches. The highway north to Aix was crossed by concrete blocks and dragon's teeth flanked on either side by an antitank wall six feet thick at its base. Peypin, northeast, and Aubagne, directly east of the city, were both strongly held by roadblocks and entrenched enemy forces.

General De Monsabert, commanding the 3rd Algerian Division, shifted the forces at his disposal and moved them along the arteries leading to Marseille. With the Chapuis group were the 7th African Tank Destroyer Battalion, the Tabors of Goums, and the 1st Armored Combat Command under General Sudre. Toward the end of the morning on 21 August, Combat Command Sudre arrived at the Le Camp road junction



GENERAL SUDRE

"... advance on Marseilles ..."

and received orders to advance on Marseille from the east, and at the same time outflank the city to the north, by moving toward Aix. The Combat Command was to seize and hold the Aubagne-Gemenos-Coulin highway triangle.

This force moved out from Le Camp, by-passed Cuges, and ran up against the strongly held enemy road blocks at Aubagne. On 22 August armored elements were left here to tie down the enemy, while infantry swung north to cross the Aubagne-Peypin axis between these two strongpoints and filter through the Etoile Mountains into Marseille. Advance troops of the 7th Algerian Rifle Regiment, after a nine-hour climb over difficult terrain without encountering the enemy,

reached the northeast suburbs of Marseille at the St. Jerome and La Rose districts.

Meanwhile, one group of Goums moved farther north through the Etoiles before swinging west to cut communications on the city's north flank. A second group of Goums had moved south of Aubagne to overrun the road system between Marseille and La Ciotat. Desperate appeals for assistance by the French Forces of the Interior already fighting within Marseille hastened the assault on the city.

By 23 August the three battalions of the 7th Algerian Regiment were closing in on Marseille from three directions: the 1st just east of the city on the Aubagne highway, the 3rd coming into the northeast from the direction of Allauch, the 2nd moving down to the north having swung through St. Saviourin and the Pilon du Roi. Combat Command Sudre supported these advances and assisted in mopping up operations at Aubagne. The 2nd Combat Command of the 1st Armored Division, having broken enemy resistance on the heights of Peypin, moved up to relieve the American 3rd Division at Aix, Gardanne, and Rognac. The occupation of these cities by Allied troops had cut off the Germans from their main communication with the Rhone River Valley. Two days later, when the group of Goums north of Marseille captured Septemes and surrounding suburbs, the city was completely isolated. On 23 August Colonel Chapuis and General De Monsabert moved into Marseille and set up command posts.

The General, from his headquarters at the Hotel du Quinzieme Corps, undertook negotiations with General Schaeffer, commanding the German garrison, beginning the evening of 23 August. They did not arrive at any agreement. The 244th German Infantry Division intended to fight for the city. The enemy still held all the forts in the port area and threw heavy artillery fire against the French forces which began to enter the city from all sides.

The next day Marseille was invested by troops of the 3rd Algerian Division and Combat Command Sudre. One battalion of Algerian riflemen seized and held the Vieux Port in the center of the city. Another held the Madeleine and Blancarde districts, which effectively bisected Marseille. The third was engaged in reducing enemy

defenses in the suburbs of Beaumont. Still the fighting continued. The Germans held firmly the fortified heights of Notre Dame de la Garde just south of the Vieux Port as well as forts along the water's edge. The enemy launched counterattacks from their positions, but were held.

On 25 August elements of the 3rd Algerian Division which had been fighting at Toulon joined the southern group of Goums; together they moved along the La Ciotat road and into the southern part of Marseille. They occupied La Seigneurerie, Ste. Marguerite, and St. Loup. They continued the attack toward Notre Dame de la Garde.

As the battle for Marseille moved into its final phase, the weight of naval and air bombardment pressed the defenders into an increasingly hopeless situation. Fighter-bombers of the XII Tactical Air Command carried out missions against the city's defenses in spite of intense flak that was thrown up. On 25, 26, and 27 August air attacks were concentrated on the islands of Pomegues and Ratonneau. On 24 August the USS *Nevada* had fired 200 rounds on Pomegues; the following day 354 rounds were thrown against the Marseille area. Mine-sweeping operations in Marseille waters were begun on 26 August with naval fire placed on the Frioules Islands and Cap Croisette south of the city.

Notre Dame de la Garde was now attacked from four directions. Two battalions of infantry plus a detachment of Goums, supported by tanks, fought their way to the summit before the German defenders hoisted a white flag and gave themselves up at 1000 hours on 26 August. The following day the area between Notre Dame de la Garde and Fort St. Nicholas to the northwest at the entrance to Vieux Port was mopped up. The fort itself, now under constant fire of French artillery, surrendered.

Scattered enemy pockets of resistance were still to be overcome in many quarters of the city. Sporadic firing continued throughout the 26th and 27th in the districts of Quatre Chemins, St. Joseph, and Le Melon in the northern part of Marseille. There were also engagements along the waterfront. The fighting near Septemes lasted for three days as Chef de Bataillon Roussel led his Goums through the alleys and gardens of La Gavotte and Moulin du Diable.

During the evening of 27 August a letter signed by General Schaeffer was delivered to General De Monsabert. The German commander requested an interview to discuss terms of surrender. At 0700 on 28 August he was brought to the Hotel du Quinzieme Corps. Particular emphasis was placed on preserving port installations which the Germans had hoped to render useless by means of large scale demolitions. Capitulation resulted not only in the liberation of the second largest city in France and the most important port on the Mediterranean, but also in the capture of the Commanding General, his



MARSEILLE

"... the second largest city in France and the most important port on the Mediterranean ..."

staff, and 7,000 prisoners of war. The Germans had not fought to quite the last man.

French Forces of the Interior had played an important part in the liberation of Hyeres, Toulon, and Marseille. As the army drew near,

resistance groups took up arms and occupied certain strategic points which had been abandoned by the enemy. Other FFI, taking advantage of the German system of organized strongpoints within the outer ring of fortifications, created zones of insecurity which were a constant annoyance to the enemy. This was particularly true in Marseille at Borely Park, Viste Park, and Notre Dame de la Garde.

Since members of the FFI had made careful note of German gun positions and their fields of fire, the location of pillboxes, minefields, and antitank obstacles, they were of invaluable service in guiding patrols



HUNTING SNIPERS IN MARSEILLE

" . . . French Infantrymen and FFI . . . mopped up . . . and continued to hunt out German snipers . . . "

to objectives with least loss of time and lives. Constant liaison was maintained between Army B and the resistance groups. However, when the FFI tried to come out openly and fight occupying enemy troops before the French army arrived, as was the case in Marseille, their

position became desperate and they sent out urgent appeals for aid. After the army's arrival in both Toulon and Marseille the FFI helped mop up isolated pockets of resistance and continued to hunt out German snipers and French collaborationists after the main enemy resistance had been broken.

At 1100 hours on 29 August troops taking part in the liberation of Marseille passed in review before the Commanding General of Army B. They were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd. The band of the 3rd Algerian Division played for the occasion, and the Marseillaise again rang through the city. The main body of French troops now moved north and west to cross the Rhone and follow up the Seventh Army's penetration of France.

Across the Rhone

As the siege of Marseille and Toulon came to an end, the enemy was in the midst of withdrawing his remaining forces up the Rhone Valley to prevent them from being cut off in southern France. It was thus decided that the French should pursue the retreating Germans up the west bank of the Rhone, while the American VI Corps continued its rapid advance up the east bank. Accordingly, the 1st French Infantry Division and the 1st French Armored Division moved out of the coastal area and made preparations to cross the Rhone River. Lack of sufficient gasoline coupled with the fact that the Germans had blown up all bridges over the river made this task difficult. However, by putting in temporary bridging across the Durance River and improvising a system of ferries on the Rhone, elements of French Army B were able to cross the Rhone in the vicinity of Avignon, Tarascon, and Arles by 29 August.

Crossing the Rhone continued until the end of August, and no contact was made with the enemy. Advance elements fanned out to the southwest and on the evening of the 30th occupied Nimes and Montpellier. Further reconnaissance was carried out as far as Sete, Beziers, and Narbonne without meeting any opposition. The 9th Colonial Infantry Division remained temporarily as a garrison force in the Marseille-Toulon area, while the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division

moved northward to the vicinity of Grenoble, where it relieved elements of the American 45th Division.

Army B in a space of 15 days had accomplished its assigned mission of capturing Toulon and Marseille and of keeping up its general advance to the north and northwest. By the division of its forces into functional groups to meet the problem of topography, and by the use of armored units to exploit unforeseen tactical opportunities, Toulon and Marseille were quickly isolated and captured. In the final analysis it must be kept in mind that the seemingly brilliant tactics of the French were made possible only by the combined efforts of the entire Seventh Army from the moment of its initial assault. The American VI Corps provided the French with a secure right flank on land. The XII Tactical Air Command gave a complete offensive as well as defensive air cover, and the Western Naval Task Force provided the off-shore fire which was a major factor in the final surrender of Toulon and Marseille. Assured of close support by land, sea, and air, Army B was able to destroy two full strength enemy divisions and secure two major ports in a campaign which lasted only 13 days.

CHAPTER VIII

The German Retreat from Southern France

THE initial assault by the Seventh Army and its subsequent expansion of the beachhead opened the way for a rapid exploitation inland. By D plus 2 a definite breakthrough had been accomplished, and the German Nineteenth Army was in serious danger of being cut in two.

The enemy's first line of defense followed an east-west arc, paralleling the coast from a point where Highway 7 approached the Durance River near Orgon eastward to the vicinity of Cannes. This primary line provided for a narrow zone stretching from the coast to points 15 to 20 miles inland. But by 18 August it was overrun by the advance of the 3rd Infantry Division westward along Highway 7 and by the occupation of the coastal area east of St. Raphael by the 36th Infantry Division. A secondary defensive line was established some 30 to 40 miles inland along the axis of the Durance-Verdon Rivers. Even this line was soon threatened by the rapid penetration of the 45th Infantry Division through Barjols toward the Durance River.

It soon became clear that the Germans had been caught on D-Day with the great bulk of their defensive strength far to the west of the assault beaches. Even as late as 17 August only the 338th Infantry Division of the four enemy divisions west of Marseille appears in the enemy order of battle. The three remaining divisions west of the Rhone River apparently experienced great difficulty in moving into the combat zone. Pre-D-Day bombardment had wrecked all but one bridge across the Rhone, and the shortage of trucks and motor fuel hampered any large scale movement of troops.

The northwestward advance of the 3rd and 45th Divisions tended to isolate from the rest of the Nineteenth Army the two enemy divisions (242nd and 244th) defending Toulon and Marseille, although contact was made with elements of both shortly after D-Day. The German 148th Reserve Division, which was responsible for the defense of the coastal region from east of Toulon to the Italian border, became separated from the 242nd on the west as a result of the Allied beachhead. By 16 August it was retreating under pressure toward the Italian frontier. Elements of the enemy 157th Reserve Division attempted to move south from Grenoble toward the assault area but were turned back by Task Force Butler at Digne and Gap.

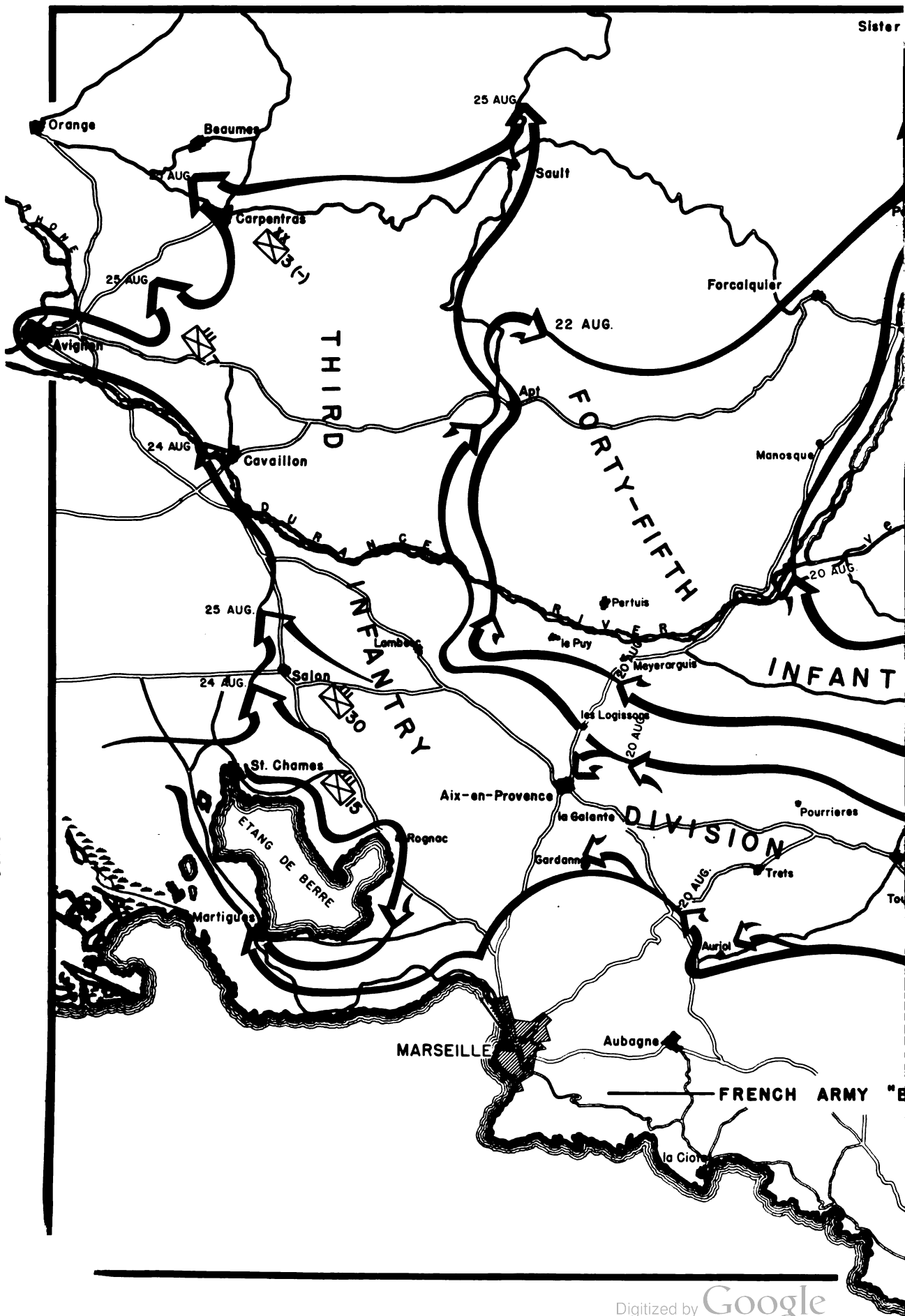
Failure of the defending forces to hold the Seventh Army at least temporarily in the immediate coastal area may be attributed largely to five major factors. The enemy, failing to solve cover plans for Operation DRAGOON, had disposed his divisions with reserves too far west. As additional troops became available they were committed in a piece-meal fashion, the result of route interdiction and motor transport shortage. Coastal units in general were weak. They were poorly equipped and lacked sufficient air support, armor, and heavy artillery; it was estimated that about half their troops were Russian, Czech, Turk, Pole, and other non-Germanic peoples. Early in the advance inland the German LXII Corps Headquarters was isolated from its command near Draguignan. Finally, defending troops were constantly harassed from the rear by the French Resistance Forces.

For the first three days after the landing, German defensive measures amounted to little more than guerilla warfare. Terrain opportunities were exploited to achieve a sort of checker-board system of isolated and uncoordinated defense with small groups attempting to install and maintain hastily built roadblocks in order to delay as long as possible the Allied advance.

Driving the Wedge

The initial momentum of the Allied assault carried the American combat units inland approximately ten miles and permitted

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an expansion of the beachhead on either flank. Because of the mountainous terrain of the coastal area, the most logical entry into the interior was by way of the Argens River Valley. It is through this depression that Highway 7 runs from Frejus west to Aix-en-Provence and northwest toward Avignon. This route very soon became an important line of communication between the beachhead and the Rhone Valley.

A VI Corps field message dated 16 August set forth the general objectives and lines of advance of the three American Divisions. The 3rd Division was to seize and hold positions along the Real Martin River until relieved by the French II Corps and was then to continue its advance along Highway 7 toward the Rhone Delta. The 45th Division, after assembly at Le Luc, was to be prepared to advance to the northwest, north of the Maures Mountains. The 36th Division was to advance eastward in the direction of Cannes; but, as soon as the beachhead was secured, was to be prepared to thrust northward along the Route Napoleon (Highway 85). This field message also provided for flank security and indicated the general direction of advance. The lack of specific objectives indicates the anticipated rapidity of the advance inland and the early absence of strong enemy resistance.

To complete VI Corps plans for exploitation inland a provisional group known as Task Force Butler was assembled at Le Muy. General Truscott, Corps Commander, had indicated that first objectives of the force would probably be a crossing of the Durance River near Manosque or St. Paul, the holding of bridges, and a drive north to Grenoble or west to Montelimar. The newly-formed provisional group consisted of a headquarters, the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the 753rd Tank Battalion (less one Medium and one Light Tank Company), 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company F, 344th Engineers, Company C, 111th Medical Battalion (plus a detachment from Clearing Company), 3426th Quartermaster Truck Company, and a detachment of the 87th Ordnance Heavy Maintenance Company.

The plan for Task Force Butler was actually conceived before the embarkation of assault troops from Naples. The Provisional Armored

Group, as it was designated by VI Corps, was commanded by the Corps Deputy Commander, Brigadier General Frederick B. Butler, and made up of elements of the assault divisions and their attached units. In compliance with orders issued by the Commanding General of VI Corps, Task Force Butler moved out of its assembly area in the vicinity of Le Muy on the morning of 18 August in the direction of Riez.

The 15th and 30th Regiments of the 3rd Division moved westward along Highway 7 toward Brignoles; the 7th Infantry continued along the southern route, Highway 98, which connects St. Tropez with Toulon. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 30th Infantry came into an assembly area east of Brignoles during the night 17-18 August. At 0700 hours the following morning the attack jumped off. The 1st Battalion pushed the assault from the north side of town engaging the enemy throughout the day, the night and into the morning of the 19th. The 2nd Battalion attacked toward the south and center of Brignoles, and street fighting continued until enemy resistance was overcome during the morning of 19 August.

To prevent Toulon from being isolated from the north, the enemy fought stubbornly to hold up the advance of the 3rd Division at Brignoles. Virtually the whole 2nd Battalion of the German 757th Infantry Regiment was destroyed in this action.

The 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments now continued their rapid advance westward along the axis of Highway 7. The 7th Infantry, having completed its mission along the coast road, moved north to join the other regiments. During the 24 hours from noon on 19 August until noon on 20 August the 3rd Division, preceded by the 3rd Reconnaissance Troop, covered 30 miles by marching and by motor transport, against only slight enemy opposition. Near Aix-en-Provence leading elements of the Reconnaissance Troop ran into an enemy roadblock late in the morning of 20 August. The enemy strongpoint was made up of at least two antitank guns, two tanks, mortars, and infantry.

The enemy appeared to be preparing to make another defensive stand at Aix. Approaching the town the 30th Infantry encountered several roadblocks covered by adjusted artillery and mortar fire. After

dark several enemy planes came over and dropped flares. The 2nd Battalion of the 30th Infantry took up a position southeast of the town while the 1st Battalion dismounted from its vehicles and moved northwest through hilly wooded country to the village of Les Logissons, north of Aix. Here it established a roadblock. Shortly afterwards the roadblock was attacked by a group of about 50 enemy bicyclists and fighting continued throughout the night of 20 August.

An all-out attack on Aix-en-Provence was ordered for 0600 the following morning and air support requested from the Seventh Army. The 1st Battalion having assembled to the northwest of Aix, attacked with two companies abreast and one company in reserve. The 2nd Battalion, having knocked out the enemy roadblock at La Galante by 1400 hours on 20 August, had moved up to occupy high ground in the southeastern suburbs of Aix. By 0600 on 21 August the 2nd Battalion was prepared to place mortar, tank destroyer, and automatic weapons fire on the town of Aix in support of the regimental attack.

The 3rd Battalion, supported by a detachment of the FFI, moved directly on the town from the northeast. The FFI Chef de Groupe drew sketches of enemy gun positions, strongpoints, and tank obstacles, and then assigned guides to each of the companies of the battalion. Companies L and K attacked abreast, met only sniper fire, and soon reached the Justice Hotel in the center of town. At 1030 hours the battalion commander was ordered to clean out the western half of Aix and contact the 1st Battalion. Apparently, the main body of the enemy had withdrawn during the previous night and had left behind only small groups to harass the Americans and delay their advance. The 2nd Battalion established a roadblock on the main route running south toward the coast, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions assembled and moved west along Highway 7.

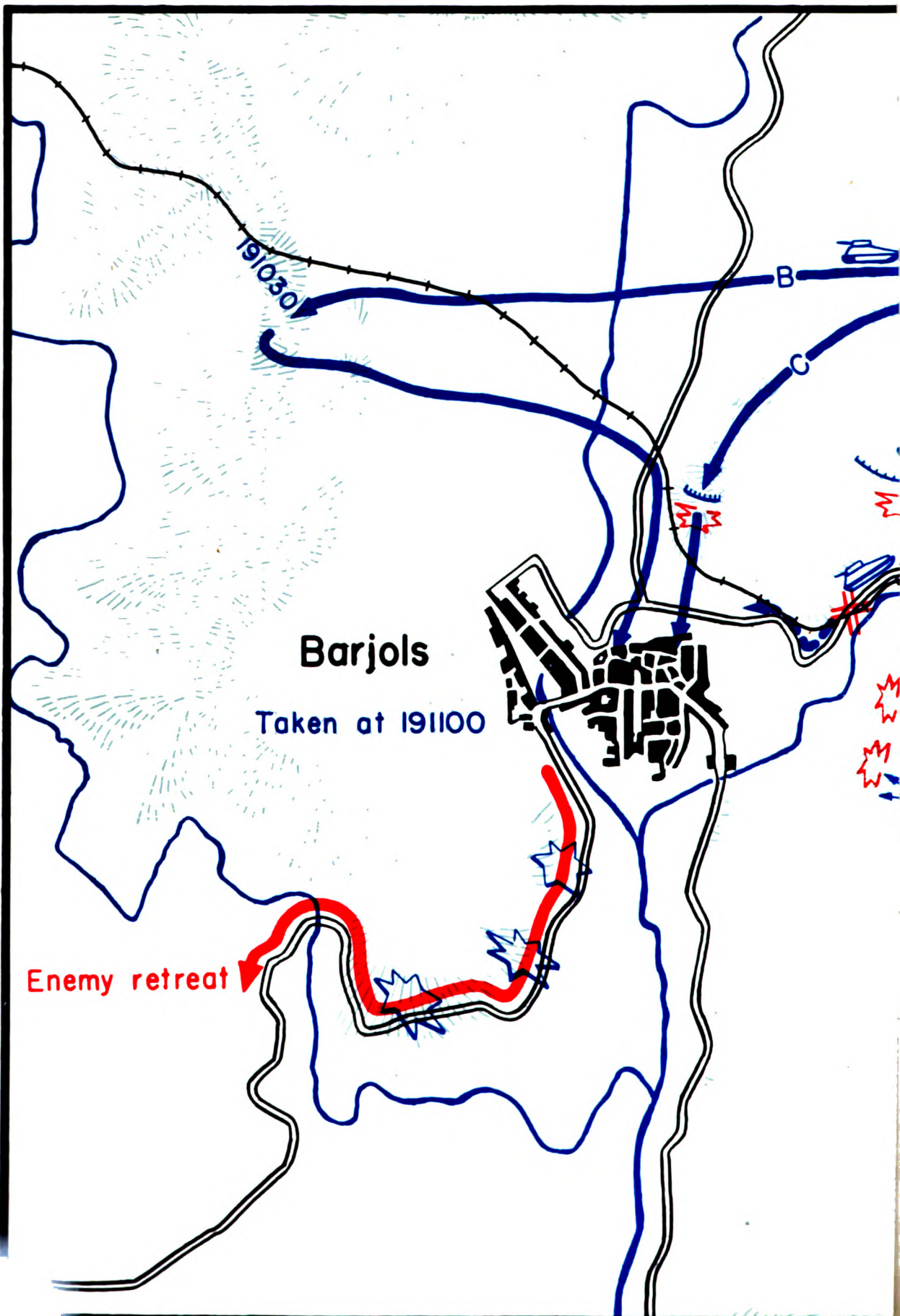
The sector between the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions was taken over by Combat Command 1 of the 1st French Armored Division. It had landed over beaches in the St. Tropez-Ste. Maxime area and on D plus 1 moved west through Gonfaron, through Flassans, and north along Road 130 to reach Cabasse. In protecting the northern flank of the beachhead Combat Command 1 encountered heavy antiaircraft,

artillery, and small arms fire between Cabasse and Carces. After a stiff fight on 18 August enemy resistance was wiped out, and several artillery pieces and numerous prisoners were captured. When the armored forces had reached Carces they swung southwest on Route 562 and arrived at Le Val where they regrouped.

In the center of the assault area, the 45th Division, consisting of the 157th, 179th, and 180th Infantry Regiments, moved northwest. The enemy offered little resistance until the 179th Infantry reached Barjols. This town was an important road junction controlling routes northward to the Durance River Valley. Here the Germans put up determined resistance. The 1st Battalion with Company I attached, attacked toward the town the afternoon of 18 August; but by nightfall the enemy still held positions in defense of Barjols. However, during the next afternoon Barjols was cleared and the 179th Regiment went on to Rians.

The 45th Division was now rapidly approaching the Durance River in the vicinity of St. Paul. When elements of the 157th Infantry arrived at the river they found the bridge only partially destroyed. Foot troops went over while the engineers worked with utmost speed to construct a vehicular crossing farther east. Little opposition was encountered on the north bank, as troops of the 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry, advanced north and west to capture Mirabeau and Pertuis. On the south bank the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, moved to the west on Route 561 and ran into small arms and medium artillery fire near Peyrolles. The advance continued, however, throughout 20 August through Peyrolles and Meyrargues.

Spearheading the American advance inland was Task Force Butler, which had moved out of its assembly area at Le Muy on the morning of 18 August. The main body of the Task Force pushed along the axis Draguignan to Salernes to Riez. On the east flank reconnaissance troops passing through 36th Division units on the road north of Draguignan toward Castellane met enemy resistance almost immediately. In this area the German LXII Corps Headquarters had been engaged by airborne troops and the 36th Division when elements of Task Force Butler arrived. The enemy Corps Headquarters was captured, including



the Commanding General, Lieutenant General Ferdinand Neuling, and about 400 officers and men. The enemy, however, continued to delay the advance north. The right flank column of Task Force Butler was ordered to slide-slip to the west and join the main body, leaving 36th Division troops in positions north of Draguignan. Task Force Butler closed in at Riez during the night 18-19 August.

While this mobile column was approaching the Durance River, well forward of the main VI Corps front, two or three battalions of the German 157th Reserve Division moved down the Grenoble Corridor from the north and were approaching Digne. General Butler saw an opportunity to encircle the enemy at Digne by a flanking maneuver and a surprise attack. One reconnaissance detachment left the main column. It turned to the northeast toward Mezel and Digne and reached Chateaufort on the Route Napoleon before meeting the enemy. The German defenders of Chateaufort surrendered without a fight. A larger detachment of Task Force Butler, consisting of one company of infantry supported by medium tanks, left Oraison to follow the east bank of the Durance River to Malijai. Here enemy resistance was weak and brief, and the detachment continued eastward along the Route Napoleon to approach Digne from the west. The German garrison in Digne, blocked from the south and west on the main highway, surrendered at 2000 hours on 19 August. About 600 prisoners were taken, including Brigadier General Hans Schuberth of Feldkommandatur 792.

The main body of Task Force Butler, having moved out of Oraison, crossed the Durance River and proceeded up the west bank along Highway 96. Arriving at Sisteron late in the afternoon of 19 August, General Butler established his command post and sent reconnaissance elements to outpost the area to the north. Information was received that additional elements of the German 157th Reserve Division were moving southward from Grenoble and that an enemy force had already occupied Gap. The Provisional Armored Group awaited orders from VI Corps and assembled to the northwest of Sisteron. There the main body was joined by the two detachments which had cleared the enemy from Digne.

Since there were two alternate routes between Sisteron and

Grenoble, a new tactical situation developed. The main column, preceded by reconnaissance forces, continued northward through Aspres to seize and hold Col de la Croix Haute, a mountain pass on Highway 75. This move blocked the western highway against German elements coming down from Grenoble. A second column swung east from Aspres and, supported by French Resistance Groups in considerable strength, attacked the town of Gap on the afternoon of 20 August. After a brief engagement the enemy surrendered 1,000 prisoners, a large ration dump, and a demolition supply dump. Thus, by blocking the Col de la Croix Haute and capturing Gap, Task Force Butler effectively checked German movement southward from Grenoble toward the beachhead.

On the VI Corps right flank the 36th Infantry Division had advanced from Frejus and St. Raphael northwest to Le Muy and had spread out eastward into the foothills of the maritime Alps. Near Le Muy the 142nd Infantry had made contact with the 1st Airborne Task Force by 17 August and moved through Trans-en-Provence to Draguignan. On the division's eastern flank the 141st Infantry spread out to take over additional road blocks established by the 143rd Infantry, which was relieved on 18 August and began movement to Draguignan, the divisional assembly area.

On 18 August Task Force Eitt, made up of two infantry companies of the 141st Regiment, moved to the north of attack Callian, three miles east of Fayence. In Callian, French partisans reinforced a garrison of paratroopers, including 15 wounded, who had been trapped and surrounded by the enemy. Fighting continued throughout 19 August. The town changed hands twice before it was finally cleared of German machine gun and small arms fire. However, there was little enemy activity along the rest of the front held by the 141st Infantry, which maintained defensive positions on the eastern flank until relieved by the 1st Airborne Task Force on 20 August. The enemy forces in this sector had become isolated from the main body of the German Nineteenth Army. They were already preoccupied with the details of their withdrawal to the Italian frontier.

The Corps right flank was secured. The 36th Infantry Division now began a general movement to the northwest. The 143rd Infantry,

preceded by tank destroyers, moved from Draguignan to Sisteron where the regiment made contact with Task Force Butler and halted temporarily to await further orders. The 142nd Infantry moved to Castellane and prepared to continue northwest; the 141st assembled in the vicinity of Draguignan.

In the first five days of invasion, beachhead forces had penetrated inland against relatively little opposition. Preliminary defensive lines established by the German forces had broken. This breach, coupled with the lack of suitably disposed reserves with which to close the gap, had two far reaching results. First, the German 148th



PURSUING THE ENEMY FROM BRIGNOLES

"... Preliminary defensive lines established by the German forces had broken . . ."

Reserve Division was now cut off from the rest of the Nineteenth Army; and, though it continued to fight delaying actions eastward toward the Italian frontier, it was never again able to take part in a coordinated action. Second, with an exposed left flank the Nineteenth Army was

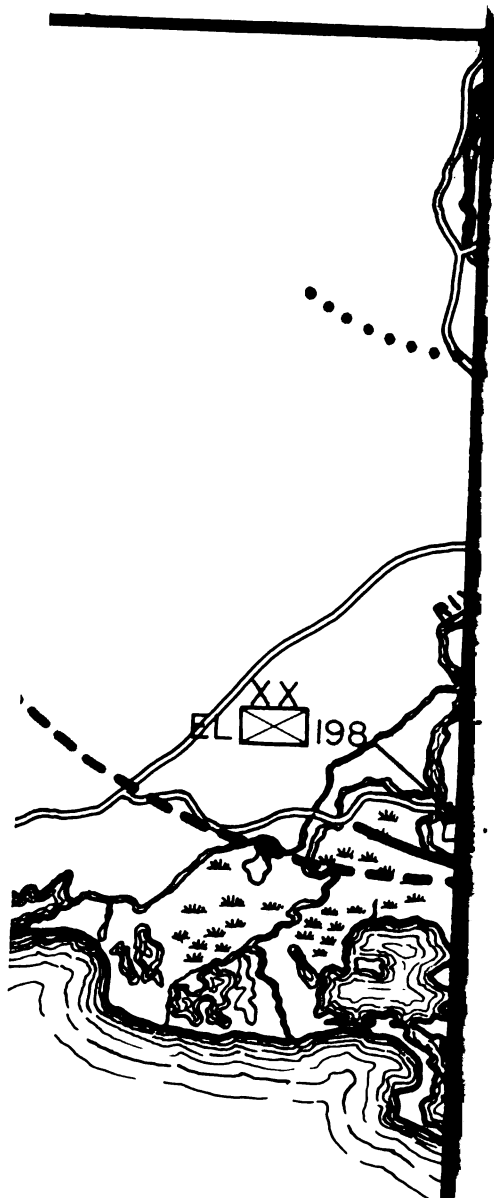
unable to prevent an Allied exploitation inland with its attendant threat to the Rhone Valley.

By 20 August French Army B, having moved west along the coast, was now approaching Toulon and Marseille. The American 3rd Division had captured Brignoles, and moved up to Aix-en-Provence along Highway 7, forcing open this route to the Rhone Delta. The 45th Division had penetrated to the northwest to occupy Barjols in their approach to the Durance River. The 36th Division had advanced along the Argens River Valley through the Esterel chain of mountains, and had secured the right flank of the beachhead by pushing the German defenders toward the Italian frontier. Finally, Task Force Butler by occupying Digne, Sisteron, and Gap had severed German communications in the Grenoble Corridor and had opened the way for a rapid advance north to Grenoble or west to the Rhone River and Montelimar.

The Rhone Triangle

The Rhone River in its southward course towards the Mediterranean forms a triangular alluvial delta with its apex at Avignon and the two base points at Montpellier to the west and Aix-en-Provence to the east. Because of the nature of the terrain and the existing road nets, military traffic from the coastal area of southern France, both to the east and to the west of the Rhone River, must pass through the area of this triangle by way of two of the three cities. The lower Durance River Valley parallels the eastern side of the Rhone Triangle and creates a narrow corridor between two hill masses. From Aix to Avignon, Highway 7 passes through this defile which offered the enemy excellent terrain for delaying tactics to defend the eastern leg of the Rhone Triangle.

A Seventh Army field order of 19 August instructed the American VI Corps to seize and secure Aix-en-Provence. At the same time French Army B was to relieve all American troops south of Highway 7 and continue west to capture Toulon and Marseille. The capture of Aix would break the enemy's chief route of communications between the Rhone Triangle and the two Mediterranean ports. The Germans, consequently, moved several battle groups forward to block the progress



of the 3rd Division. This strategy was executed by stubborn delaying actions fought at both Brignoles and Aix.

Prior to 15 August the German 11th Panzer Division had been stationed near Bordeaux on the Atlantic coast. As soon as the German High Command was fairly certain that the Allied attack would come against the Mediterranean coast and not the Atlantic, it ordered the 11th Panzer Division to the southeast. It was to move through the Toulouse-Carcassonne-Narbonne Corridor so as to appear in the German order of battle in southern France. On 15 and 16 August air reconnaissance revealed that the entire division, loaded on 33 trains, was moving eastward toward the Rhone. This rail movement, according to subsequent reports, was stranded by tactical bombing. Personnel and equipment were forced to detrain and make their way toward the Rhone Triangle by division transportation.

Captured enemy field orders revealed that the tactical mission of the 11th Panzer Division was two-fold. First, it was to hold the east side of the Rhone Triangle along Highway 7 against the westward advance of the American 3rd Division. This would permit the bulk of the four less mobile German Divisions to withdraw along the western leg of the triangle between Montpellier and Avignon and northward up the Rhone Valley. Second, the 11th Panzer Division was to act as an escort for German units in their retreat northward up the Rhone Valley. Between Aix-en-Provence and Avignon, the 3rd Division encountered tanks of the 11th Panzer Division working in small groups supported by infantry.

Contact with the German Panzer Division seriously suggested the threat of an armored counterattack. At noon on 21 August General Truscott issued orders to halt the main body of the 3rd Division. Only reconnaissance elements were to be sent beyond the line Le Puy-Rognac until the strength of the opposing German armor could be determined. Shortly afterwards the advance was continued beyond, but it was four days later before the 7th Infantry arrived at Avignon. For the first time since D-Day the enemy on the VI Corps left flank began destroying bridges behind them. This was an indication that the delaying mission had now been completed.

Enemy Withdrawal Up the Rhone Valley

From Avignon to Lyon the Rhone Valley traverses a distance of 133 miles running almost straight and nearly due north. The river divides the Central Massif on the west bank from the Alps du Dauphine on the east. On the western bank water courses have created severely defiladed avenues of communication. From Avignon to Orange the Rhone forms a broad, dry, sandy, loam plain suitable for military maneuver. North of Orange the river enters a 2,400-yard-wide corridor for a distance of five miles and then broadens out again until it approaches the Donzere Gorge, where its point of minimum defilade is only a quarter of a mile wide. The valley opens up into the plain of Montelimar for a distance of some ten miles and then is again constricted by Cruas Gorge, or the "Gate of Montelimar". With exception of the 22 mile Valence Plain immediately north of the Gate of Montelimar, the Rhone Valley's northward course to Lyon is generally narrow with defiladed walls.

A highway flanks each side of the Rhone River from Avignon to Lyon. On the east bank, Highway 7 is the best constructed and the most suitable for military traffic. On the west side of the river, Highway 86 covers the same distance but passes through more mountainous country. A highway running from Nimes, through Le Puy to Lyon was available as an evacuation route for German divisions in southwest France; but this road runs through the Massif Central and follows a winding course which is over 100 miles longer than either of the other two roads.

The German High Command issued five field orders covering the period 20-24 August. These were to govern the strategy of withdrawal of the German Nineteenth Army. A few days later the orders were captured in the vicinity of Savasse.

Field Order No. 1, dated 20 August, directed all elements east of the Rhone Triangle and south of the Durance River to assemble in the vicinity of L'Isle sur la Sorgue located on Route 100. This town, protected by favorable defensive terrain, was considered a convenient zone for reorganizing various German elements split up by the rapid

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Allied advances. All marches were to be made at night. Rear guards, equipped with heavy weapons and demolitions, were to be left behind to destroy bridges and other installations of value. Finally, the individual soldier was to "fight cunningly", and at the risk of a "mobile court-martial" was enjoined against looting and from wandering about unarmed.

The second captured field order, dated 21 August, was concerned with the retention of the Rhone Triangle for purposes of covering the retreat. Phase line "C" was set up as a tentative main line of resistance to be held until at least 23 August. An armored group from the 11th Panzer Division was ordered to remain in front of the phase line in order to prevent a "surprise" penetration by the American 3rd Division from the southeast. The main line of resistance was to be defended by the German 338th Infantry Division. Decisive importance was given to the defense of the town of Orgon. Its early capture by the Americans would prevent the reorganization of the German forces taking place farther north at L'Isle sur la Sorgue.

Arles was also to be strongly defended. It was located on the main route which ran along the base of the Rhone Triangle and connected Montpellier with Aix-en-Provence; now that Toulon and Marseille had been encircled, there was increasing danger that the American 3rd Infantry Division might push on toward the Rhone along the north shore of the Etang de Berre. Allied bombing had destroyed the bridge across the Rhone River at Arles. The Germans then established a ferry shuttle service with the view of evacuating elements in the coastal zone west of the Rhone Delta. This ferry service was to be maintained at all costs until 23 August.

The third German field order, also issued on 21 August was the authority for the withdrawal northward up the Rhone Valley. The Allied bridgehead in northern France had expanded rapidly and so, threatened to completely sever German lines of communication with home bases east of the Rhine. The Nineteenth Army, therefore, was ordered to "disengage itself from the enemy" and join the southern wing of German Army Group "B" which was operating in northern and central France.

A new phase line was set up behind which the divisions would reorganize for the retreat. The line began at Sommieres on the left side of the Rhone Triangle and continued as an arc to include Arles, Orgon, and terminated at Apt, which was considerably more extensive than the phase line delineated in the previous field order. Apparently, the German Army hoped to protect the escape route of the three divisions west of the Rhone River and to collect the disorganized elements, active in battle, to the east and southeast of the phase line. The 11th Panzer Division was ordered to assume the role of the chief maneuvering element of the retreating forces. It was to lead the withdrawal up the Rhone Valley and block all entrances to Highway 7.

The first specific objective of the retreat was the confluence of the Drome and the Rhone Rivers south of Valence. Delaying actions were to be fought whenever necessary, but the main emphasis was to be placed on keeping open the escape route. Marseille and Toulon were to be defended "to the last man according to an order of the Fuehrer."

On 23 August the German High Command issued its fourth field order which included instructions for the execution of the disengaging movement. In leading the withdrawal, the 11th Panzer Division was ordered to pull out all its elements operating in the Rhone Triangle, continue northward along Highway 7 through the Gate of Montelimar, and ward off the blocking movements of the American 36th Infantry Division and Task Force Butler to the northeast of Montelimar. The German 198th Infantry Division was to follow the 11th Panzer Division by forced marches and render assistance in breaking through the American blocking force.

The fifth captured German field order, which covered the last phase of the withdrawal from the Rhone Triangle to the Gate of Montelimar, was issued on 24 August. The protection of the rear of the column was left to the German 338th Infantry Division as far north as phase line "E" at a point where the Eygues River flows into the Rhone. Here Highway 7 leaves the plain of Orange and enters a narrow defile which gave a certain flank protection to the retreating forces. The movement of the German 338th Division suggested that the last of the slower German elements had now evacuated the lower Rhone Valley

and were endeavoring to push on past the Americans who were occupying the high ground northeast of Montelimar.

Enemy Motor and Rail Movement

Reconnaissance flights of the XII Tactical Air Command discovered the pattern of enemy traffic throughout the Rhone Valley. During the first six days after D-Day German rail and motor movement was in accordance with the tactical situation. Immediately after the Seventh Army landings enemy divisions west of the Rhone Delta began a movement eastward toward the assault beaches. In the Rhone Valley the preponderance of both motor and rail traffic was southward from Lyon. From Grenoble traffic moved south through the corridor toward the invasion coast. Immediately after D-Day the German intention seems to have been to reinforce the troops along the beachhead, or perhaps, to build up reserves in the lower Rhone Valley for a major counterthrust.

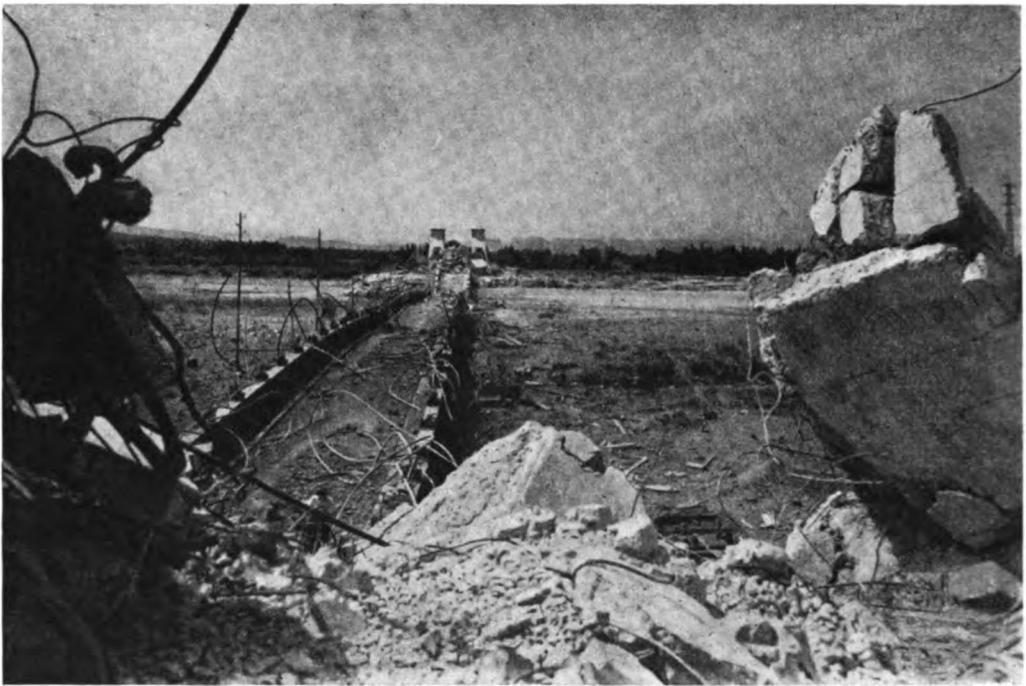
By 21 August, however, the direction-pattern of enemy traffic was reversed. There was no longer any movement from west of the Rhone toward the assault area. Both rail and motor convoys were now observed turning northward up the Rhone Valley at Avignon.

The route to Lyon along the western bank of the river was being used to capacity. This increased traffic along a less desirable military route indicated that the enemy was becoming increasingly concerned over the rapid thrust of the 3rd Infantry Division along Highway 7. Included in this northbound exodus were fuel, ammunition, and general supply trains, both motor-driven and horse-drawn, along with artillery and personnel. The enemy also made maximum use of the railroads on both sides of the Rhone River, although tactical bombing considerably hampered rail movement. Ferry services across the Rhone were kept in operation north of Avignon, and troops were transferred to the east bank whenever it was possible.

Air reconnaissance reported that each large group of motor trucks was preceded by from two to ten tanks, presumably from the 11th Panzer Division, acting as a mobile escort. The shortage of motor fuel

was critical and many troops were observed being towed on bicycles. Several bicycles were spaced at intervals along a tow rope which was attached to a troop carrier.

The pressure applied by Task Force Butler against enemy traffic in the Gate of Montelimar was reflected farther south. On 24 August reconnaissance reports stated that south of Montelimar there was heavy movement, both road and rail, along the east and west banks of the Rhone River; but from Loriol north to Lyon movement was almost non-existent. This absence of traffic implied a complete interdiction by Task Force Butler and elements of the 36th Infantry

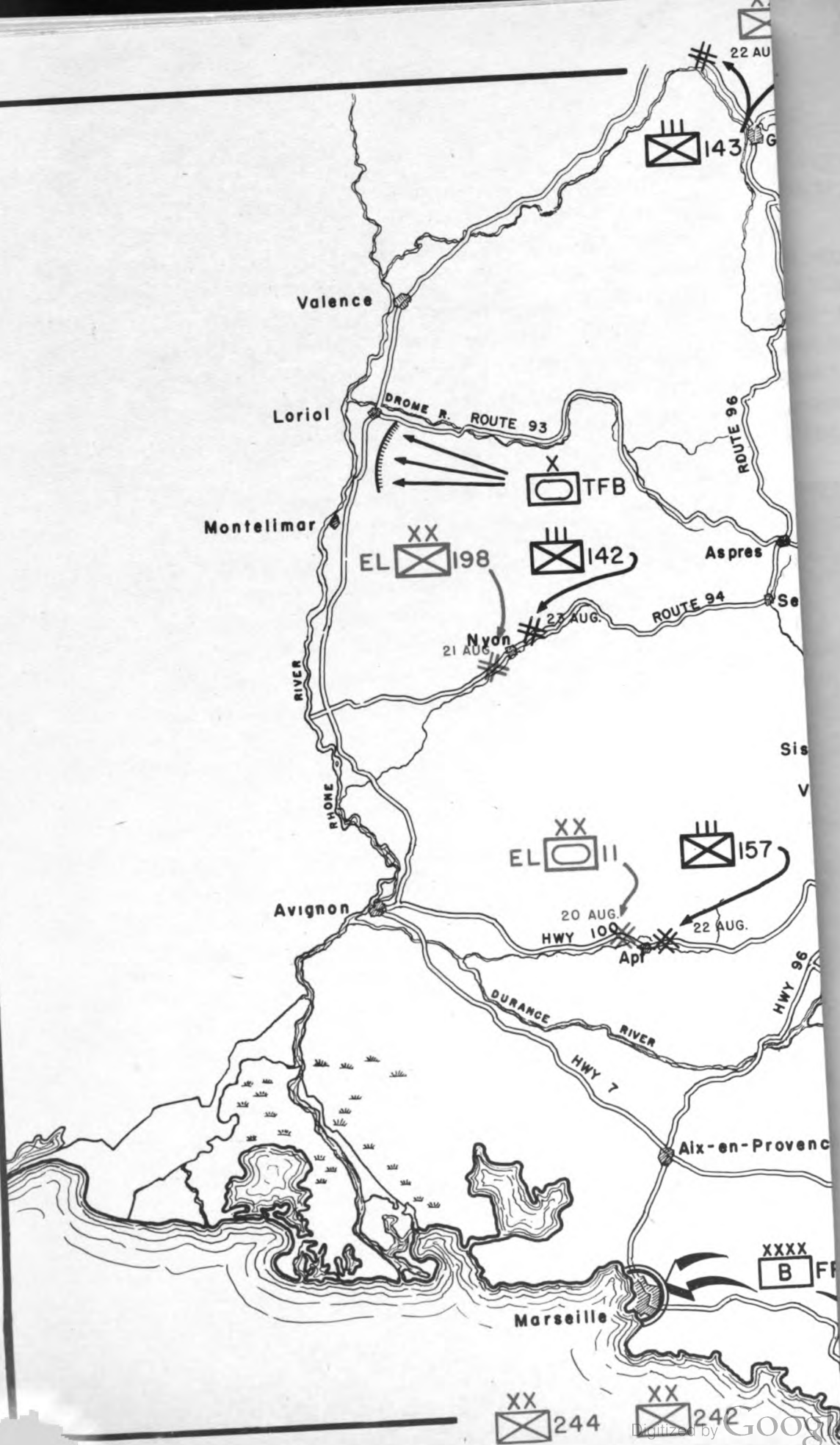


ENORMOUS SPAN BRIDGE DESTROYED BY THE ENEMY AT CAVAILLON

"... Cavaillon was occupied by the 3rd Division without enemy contact . . ."

Division. Either the Rhone Valley was completely blocked, or the enemy had temporarily halted all his convoys until the 11th Panzer Division could break through and lead the slower elements out of the trap.

The northwestward thrust of the 3rd Division toward the



Rhone River tended to accelerate German withdrawal in the direction of Lyon. The 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments actively patrolled against elements of the German 338th Infantry and 11th Panzer Divisions to the northwest of Aix. The 7th Infantry moved steadily forward along Highway 7. Reconnaissance troops, sent out as patrols on both sides of the Etang de Berre, occupied the town of Martigues, from which the enemy had withdrawn. Forward elements had reached the Rhone River at Arles by 24 August. The 3rd Infantry Division moved north across the Durance River and on the 25th occupied Avignon, Orgon, and Cavaillon without enemy contact.

Five of the eight enemy divisions operating along the coast of southern France had reached Montelimar by 27 August. Led by the 11th Panzer Division, the 198th, 716th, 189th, and 338th Infantry Divisions joined in the northbound retreat. The two remaining divisions west of the target area, the 242nd and the 244th, were hopelessly encircled in Toulon and Marseille. They ultimately surrendered to French Army B. The 148th Reserve Division in the Cannes-Nice area and the 157th Reserve Division at Grenoble sought refuge by passing through the Alps toward Italy.

The Grenoble Corridor

The principal route of communication between the coastal area of southern France and the area north of the Isere River Valley is by way of the so-called Grenoble Corridor. This natural entrance into east-central France runs almost due north from the coast and lies about midway between the Rhone River and the Italian Frontier.

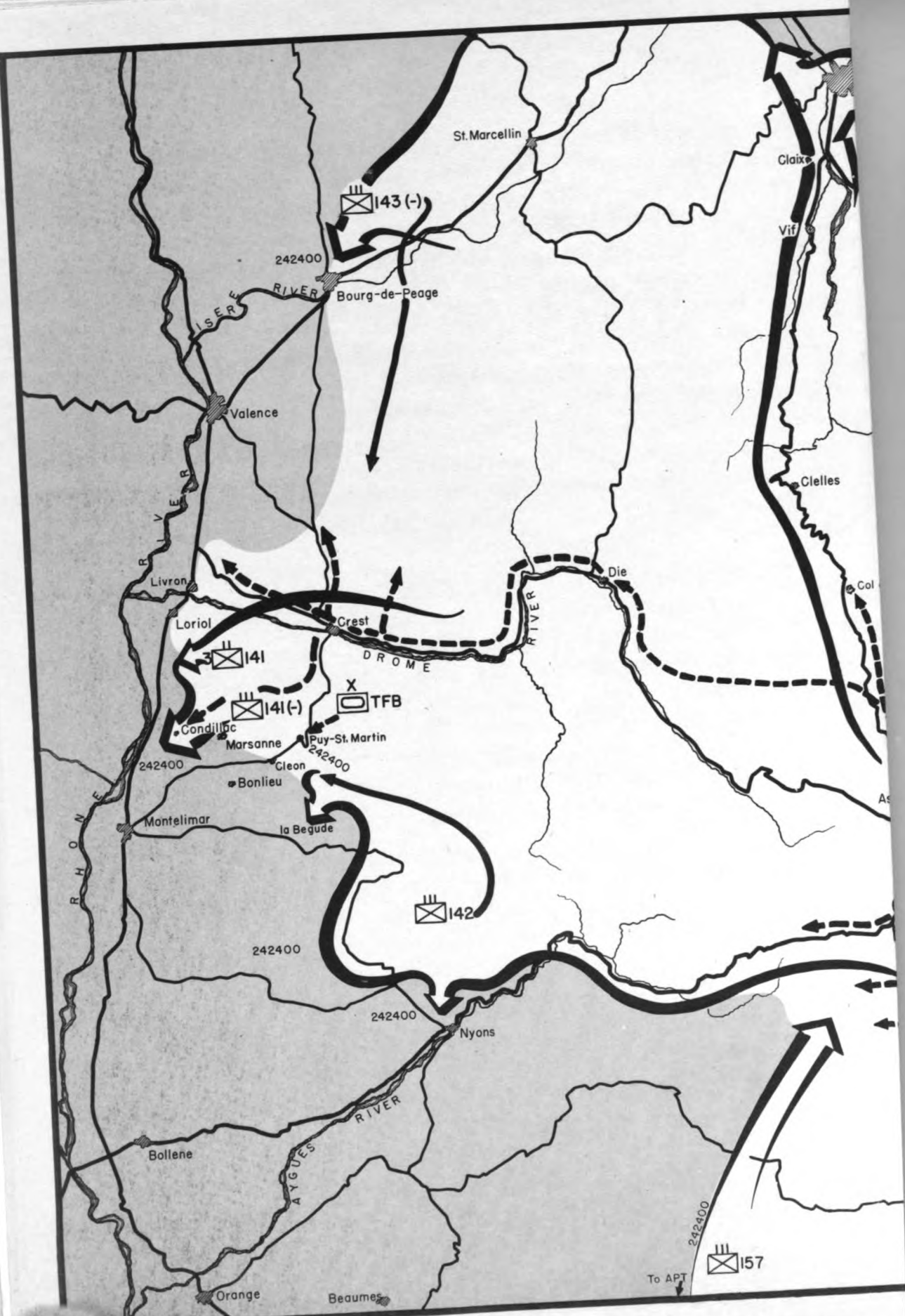
The Grenoble Corridor is approached from the south by two principal highways, Route 96, which originates at Aix-en-Provence and runs northeast paralleling the Durance River, and the Route Napoleon (Highway 85), which begins at Nice and follows a northwestward course through the Provence Alps. At Valonne, Highway 96 joins the Route Napoleon and continues on through defiladed terrain to Sisteron. Here the road divides again. One branch passes through Serres and Aspres; the other passes through the town of Gap. At Pont-de-Claix the

two roads again join and proceed on to Grenoble. Several routes connect the Grenoble Corridor with the Rhone Valley to the west and with Alpine Passes to the east. At Aspres Route 93 follows the Drome River westward to its confluence with the Rhone north of Loriol; Highway 94 is an alternate east-west route from Serres to Pont-St. Esprit, halfway between Avignon and Montelimar.

A Seventh Army field order, dated 19 August, directed that elements of the American VI Corps reconnoiter in force to Digne and Castellane, secure Sisteron and crossings over the Durance River. One division was to be on the alert for an advance to Grenoble. The field order further provided that the 1st Airborne Task Force would relieve elements of the 36th Division on the VI Corps right flank and assigned it a zone of responsibility along a general line from Fayence to La Napoule. This general defensive line originated on the coast west of Cannes and was later extended northward to include Larche Pass on the Italian frontier. The Seventh Army thus provided for the penetration of the Grenoble Corridor in depth. The Commanding General of the VI Corps had ordered Task Force Butler to spearhead the advance. This move was to be followed in close tactical support by the 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions.

As early as 20 August General Truscott, Commander of VI Corps, considered the possibility of moving Task Force Butler west to the vicinity of Montelimar. The FFI were reported to be well organized on both sides of the Rhone River and were expected to be of great assistance in any attempt to block enemy movement in the Rhone Valley. On the evening of the 20th, instructions were sent to General Butler "to put out reconnaissance forces on the road nets to the north and west, examining the possibility of advancing to the vicinity of Montelimar; to block enemy forces withdrawing up the Rhone Valley from the south; and also be prepared to continue the advance to Grenoble." At 2045 hours another message was sent from VI Corps: "You will move at first light 21 August with all possible speed to Montelimar. Block all routes of withdrawal up Rhone Valley in that vicinity. 36th Division follows you."

General Butler ordered one troop of the 117th Reconnaissance



Squadron (reinforced) to send out patrols and to establish a roadblock north of Gap. Other elements of the troops were to push north up the Montmaur-St. Disdier road. One reconnaissance platoon and one battery of the 59th Armored Field Artillery were to remain near Col de la Croix Haute to block the road at this point and to reconnoiter toward Monestier. These forces were to remain in position until relieved by elements of the 36th Division.

On the morning of 21 August those elements of Task Force Butler which had established a roadblock on the Route Napoleon at Col Bayard north of Gap were attacked. The enemy force, estimated at two battalions, had moved southeast from La Mure during the previous night. After a short fire fight this attack was successfully repulsed. To the west on the alternate route to Grenoble, Monestier was reported cleared of the enemy, but north of Monestier fighting flared up at Vif between a small enemy force and the FFI.

The main body of Task Force Butler, preceded by reconnaissance units, moved westward from the Grenoble Corridor and followed Highway 93 along the valley of the Drome River. By dusk on 21 August reconnaissance elements had entered the Rhone Valley. Throughout this rapid advance no contact was made with the enemy until a German convoy of approximately 30 vehicles was observed moving north out of Livron. The advance troops of Task Force Butler attacked and destroyed the vehicles, killing and wounding several of the enemy. Eleven prisoners from a Russian labor battalion were taken.

Again there was no further contact with the enemy until reconnaissance patrols attempted to cut Highway 7 west of Condillac. At that point they were driven out by superior German forces. However, units of Task Force Butler pushed on to within a few miles of Montelimar where they occupied high ground overlooking the valley below. General Butler established his command post at Marsanne.

As Task Force Butler moved toward the Rhone Valley, the 36th Division crossed the Durance and continued north toward Grenoble. The 141st and 142nd Infantry Regiments, by means of shuttles, moved into Aspres and Gap and relieved elements of Task Force Butler at

several roadblocks. The 143rd Infantry occupied Col de la Croix Haute and prepared to send troops north to Grenoble.

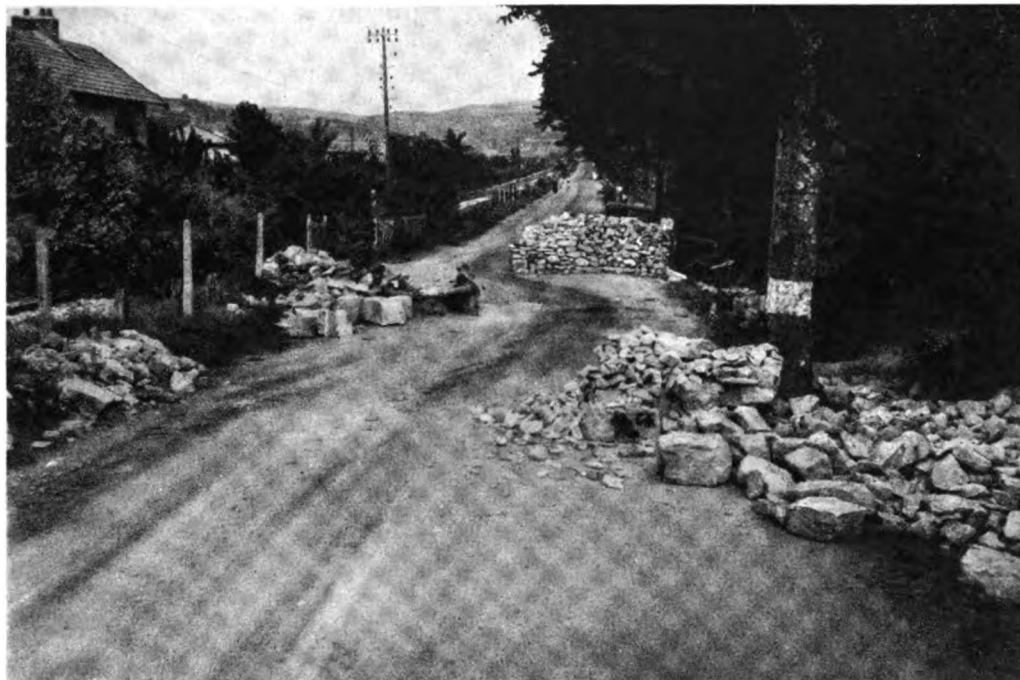
Throughout 22 August the 36th Division fanned out north, west, and east from the vicinity of Aspres against practically no opposition. The 3rd Battalion of the 143rd Infantry, moving rapidly north along Route 75, passed through Clelles, Monestier, Vif, and arrived at Pont de Claix. From this last town patrols entered Grenoble without opposition and occupied the city at 1400 hours on 22 August.

Almost immediately reconnaissance elements pushed on five or six miles north and northeast of Grenoble but made no contact with the enemy. The FFI were reported to be in control of all bridges north of the city, and the main route was thought to be cleared as far as Lyon. Later in the day the 1st Battalion of the 143rd Infantry arrived in Grenoble; it had liquidated an enemy pocket at Vizille and captured 30 prisoners.

The 142nd Infantry, 36th Division, continued to hold roadblocks north and east of Gap. New blocks were established in the vicinity of Guillestre, and patrols were sent out to reconnoiter Route 94 in the direction of Briancon, where the FFI reported the assembly of a large enemy force. At the same time the 141st Regimental Combat Team, supported by the 141st and the 977th Field Artillery Battalions, was to proceed west from Aspres, in accordance with orders from the Commanding General of VI Corps, with all possible speed to reinforce Task Force Butler in the Montelimar area. Movement began at 1430 hours on 22 August, and by midnight the two field artillery battalions were in position near Marsanne, prepared to fire missions across the Rhone River.

With the capture of Barjols on 19 August the 45th Infantry Division had opened the route to the lower Durance Valley. The Germans had demolished all the bridges in the division sector, and the crossing of the Durance River was marked more by physical inconvenience than actual enemy resistance. This crossing was also hampered by the swollen waters of the river. Heavy thunder showers in the Provence Alps had caused the Durance to rise more than three feet above its normal seasonal level. Division troops, nevertheless,

crossed to the north bank and spread out in two directions along the Durance. As the 180th Infantry Regiment moved downstream toward Avignon, the 179th Infantry turned upstream toward Volonne. The 157th Infantry, in the division center, crossed the Luberon Mountains



BLASTED GERMAN ROADBLOCK

" . . . Highway 100 at Apt . . . "

along Highway 543 to reach the road junction with Highway 100 at Apt. About 100 of the enemy in Apt put up a brief fire fight. The 1st Battalion of the 157th Infantry, supported by a considerable number of FFI, attacked the town from three directions. All resistance was overcome by 1520 hours on 22 August. At Apt strong roadblocks were established against elements of the 11th Panzer Division. The Germans were operating east of Avignon on Route 100 in an effort to protect the eastern side of the Rhone Triangle.

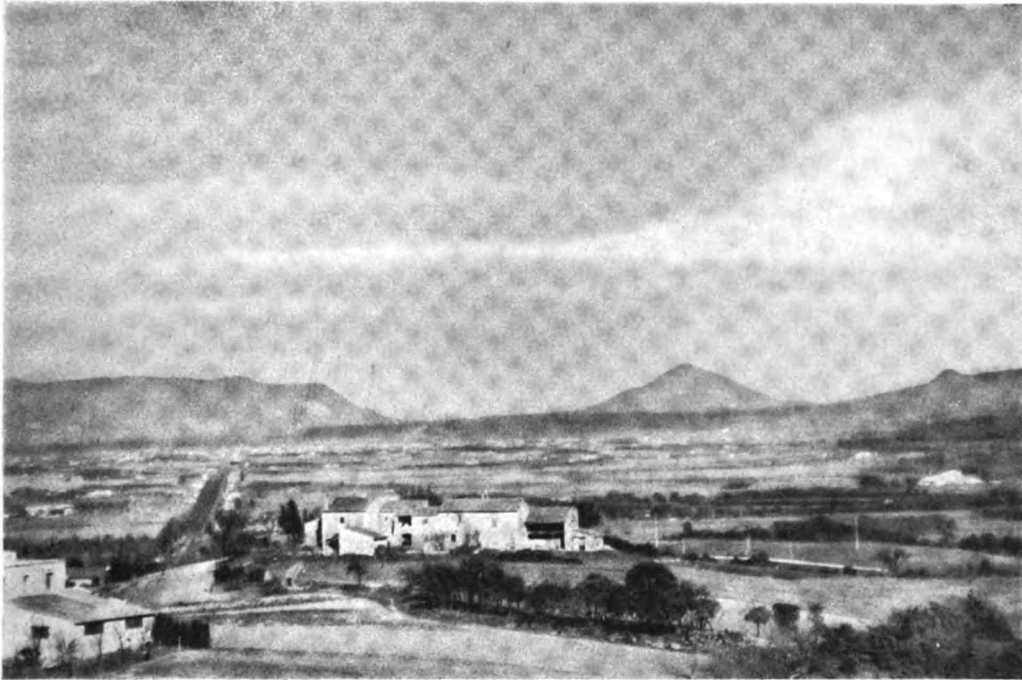
The other two regiments of the 45th Division encountered little enemy opposition. The 180th received some small arms fire in and

about Rognes, but as they moved in to occupy the town the enemy withdrew. Only cautious and slow advances were made as two battalions were alerted to move to the vicinity of Aspres. The 179th Regiment was relieved of roadblocks along the Durance at Rians, Forcalquier, and St. Aubon and was ordered to an assembly area in the vicinity of Grenoble. Upon arrival it was attached to the 36th Division.

CHAPTER IX

The Battle of Montelimar

THERE is no doubt that topography was destined to play an important role in the battle of Montelimar. South of the town and east of the Rhone a broad plain extends for seven miles. Here the enemy was expected to



MONTELIMAR — TAKEN FROM THE SOUTH

"... Montelimar is a key communications center ..."

organize and to concentrate his forces before entering the battle area proper. Montelimar is a key communications center. Highway 7 runs north and south through the town; two roads branch out to the west to

cross the Rhone River; two others lead to the east toward Nyons and Crest. The inability of the American forces to seize and hold Montelimar during the early stages of the battle made it necessary for them to control the hill masses northeast of the town in order to prevent the Germans from moving north along Highway 7 and east along the Roubion River Plain.

Two tributaries flow into the Rhone River from the east at points almost midway between the city of Lyon and the Mediterranean. The Drome, the larger and more northerly of the two streams, empties into the Rhone some four or five miles west of the towns of Livron and Loriol. The Roubion River, the smaller and more southerly tributary, discharges into the Rhone about two and a half miles southwest of Montelimar. Fifteen or 20 miles inland from the east bank of the Rhone are the foothills of the French Pre-Alps. This area of less than 250 square miles, is bounded on the west by the Rhone River, on the north by the Drome River, on the east by the foothills of the Pre-Alps, and on the south by the Roubion River. This terrain, roughly a square, with Montelimar, Charols, Crest, and Livron at its four points, was the setting for the eight day Battle of Montelimar.

The Rhone River, western border of the quadrangle, is characterized chiefly by steep banks as it passes through the battle area. Seven miles south of Montelimar is the Donzere Gorge, two miles long and only 440 yards wide. Northward from this gorge the Rhone Valley opens up into the Plain of Montelimar. This plain is "T" shaped, extending northward along the Rhone Valley for ten miles, and eastward along the Roubion Valley for 12 miles, where it reaches the foothills of the Pre-Alps. Three miles north of Montelimar the Rhone Valley enters another defile, the Cruas Gorge or the Gate of Montelimar. As the Rhone Valley continues northward for the next ten miles, the maximum width is not over one mile. On the western side of the valley cliffs rise to a height of 1,600 feet, and on the east is the heavily forested area of the Marsanne. Here the Rhone Valley widens to admit the Drome River and to enter the southern part of the plain of Valence.

The Drome River, northern border of the battle square, creates a small alluvial valley, approximately two miles wide and originating

at Crest. During low water periods it is possible to establish fording sites along the lower reaches of the Drome River.

Three hill masses north of Montelimar are the key to the control of the town and the highways running north and east of it. The largest, but not the highest, of these hill formations is Ridge 300 (389-290: represents altitude in meters), which is about two and one half miles north and a little east of Montelimar. This ridge descends to the north rather gradually toward the village of La Coucourde. The second and smallest of the three hill masses is Hill 294, (represents altitude in meters). Oval shaped and scarcely over a half mile long through its major axis, Hill 294 is northwest of Montelimar and just southeast of Ridge 300. The highest of these hill masses north of Montelimar is Hill 430 (represents altitude in meters). Nearly circular, with a diameter of almost a mile at its base, Hill 430 lies approximately one quarter of a mile northeast of Hill 294, and less than a mile east of the northern portion of Ridge 300.

A hostile force in control of Montelimar possesses various alternatives for moving its men and equipment northward toward Lyon. It may move directly up Highway 7, or it may turn eastward at Montelimar to move through the battle quadrangle by means of several secondary routes. In any case, the enemy would be forced to cross the Drome River, since the foothills prevent any large scale military movement eastward.

In order to keep the enemy from reaching Lyon, the following was necessary: 1) Effective blocking of Highway 7. 2) Prevention of enemy movement through the battle area east of Highway 7 and west of the foothills of the Pre-Alps. 3) Complete control of the Drome River, including possession of bridges and fording sites. Highway 7 could be blocked by the installation of physical road barriers, artillery fire, or by the complementary use of both. Since the Marsanne forest parallels Highway 7 from Montelimar to Loriol, the exact location of roadblocks placed on the highway and of artillery emplaced in the Marsanne forested hills would be directed by the tactical situation.

To prevent the enemy from moving through the battle area east of Montelimar it would be necessary to control the alluvial plain

of the lower Roubion River Valley. To keep the enemy from crossing the Roubion north into the battle square, it would be necessary to blow bridges, to defend the river line, and to hold the towns of Marsanne, Puy St. Martin, and Cleon to the north. To prevent movement east along the Roubion, the only method was to block his forces with infantry and artillery.

Preparations For Battle

As late as 20 August it had not been decided whether Task Force Butler should continue to advance north toward Grenoble, or turn west to the Rhone Valley where a new tactical situation seemed to be developing. The FFI had recommended to the Commanding General of Task Force Butler that he continue on to Grenoble, since in their opinion French Resistance Groups were already in control of the Rhone Valley. However, at a Seventh Army conference, held on 21 August, it was decided to send Task Force Butler to the west to occupy the high ground northeast of Montelimar.

When this order was issued, Task Force Butler was about 30 miles south of the city of Grenoble. Advance elements of the force left the Grenoble Corridor and moved west to Highway 93, passing through Die and Crest. These elements arrived in the battle area at 1700 hours on 21 August. The precipitous German withdrawal up the Rhone Valley had not yet begun.

Task Force Butler had moved into the battle area along its northern border, the Drome River. The main route of supply and communication with rear supply dumps was Highway 93, which ran east to the Grenoble Corridor. Contact had been made with the enemy in the Rhone Valley.

While Task Force Butler was awaiting the arrival of reinforcements from the Grenoble area, German tanks were known to be holding critical terrain features in the battle zone. These tanks apparently were also awaiting reinforcements from the south, since no willingness was shown for an open engagement. Both sides were marking time.

The rapid advance of Task Force Butler northward up the

Grenoble Corridor had been followed by the American 36th Division. As early as 20 August the possibility of a change in the axis of advance of the 36th Division became apparent. At 1815 hours on 21 August the Commanding General of the American VI Corps issued this brief order to the 36th Division. "Re-enforce Butler with one infantry regiment and the bulk of your long-tom and M-1 battalions. Blocking the Rhone Valley is your primary mission." This order was further implemented by later directives stating that, "The 141st Infantry Regiment is to re-enforce Butler at once Speed is essential."

The 2nd Battalion of the 141st Infantry moved out from Aspres on 22 August on its newly assigned mission, closed in at Crest by 0230 the following morning, and moved south in preparation for an attack against Montelimar. The 1st Battalion arrived at Condillac, the new regimental command post six miles northeast of Montelimar, at 0930 hours on 23 August and went into position near the 2nd Battalion. The 3rd reached Condillac at 1300 hours and was to occupy high ground south of Livron. The 141st Regiment had gathered along the Rhone, occupying the main line of resistance from Montelimar on the south to the Drome River on the north.

General Truscott had further ordered the 36th Division to block roads on both sides of the Rhone Valley. "If humanly possible create road blocks", and he added, "you must interrupt all enemy traffic on the main north-south roads in the Rhone Valley." The mission of the 36th Division was clear and explicit. The American forces were to be built up at Montelimar in an effort to block the German retreat up the Rhone.

In preparation for coming operations, Task Force Butler had taken up defensive and flank positions to support the 141st Regiment. Flank protection was made the responsibility of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron. It was of utmost importance that all enemy movement be canalized directly northward along Highway 7 to bring the enemy into the firing zone of the 141st Regiment, and to protect supply lines between the battle area and the Grenoble Corridor. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron was to patrol the entire extent of the southern border of the battle quadrangle and the road running south from Crest. It was also

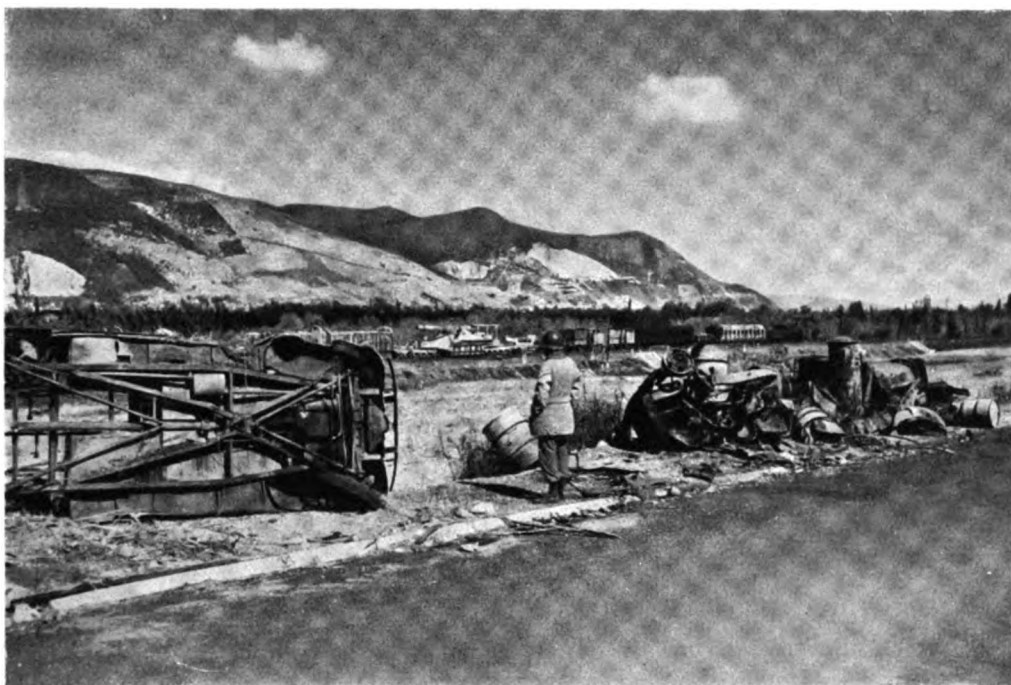
necessary to protect American troops operating within the battle area from enemy thrusts from the north. German troops were known to be located in and around Valence and Lyon, and it was feared that increased American pressure exerted at Montelimar might increase German efforts from the north to keep open the escape route. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron was therefore directed to send out vigorous patrols to the north and northwest from Livron.

With Task Force Butler had come the attached 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the first artillery unit to engage in operations at Montelimar. When Task Force Butler arrived in the battle area on 21 August, the Armored Field Artillery Battalion immediately set up its batteries along the Condillac pass, between the Marsanne Forest on the north and Hill 430 on the south. By occupation of the Condillac Pass, batteries could lay effective direct fire on Highway 7 to the northwest, on the Roubion River Valley to the southeast, and indirect fire over the three hill masses toward Montelimar.

The first test of strength between the German and American forces occurred on the afternoon of 23 August. The 2nd Battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment had been assigned the mission of attacking from the north and northeast to take Montelimar. This attack was to be supported by a platoon of tank destroyers and a platoon of tanks, but they did not arrive. The French Maquis, who were to assist in the attack, were quickly dispersed by the Germans. The only support remaining to the 2nd Battalion was that of the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion set up at Condillac Pass about eight or ten miles northeast of the tactical objective. The advance of the 2nd Battalion was halted by artillery fire from Montelimar and also from Hill 300 which was strongly held by the Germans.

The first test of strength was an American defeat. The Germans were building up their forces south of Montelimar, while the Americans were rushing reinforcements westward from the Grenoble Corridor. This early failure to capture Montelimar was to alter the pattern of the eight day battle. By maintaining possession of Montelimar the Germans retained liberty of movement in two directions. They were able to continue north along Highway 7, since they still

retained control of the high ground to the north of town, and they were able to turn eastward along the Roubion River where elements of American forces were merely deployed as flank protection. On the other hand, American artillery since 21 August had begun its destructive



IMMOBILIZED VEHICLES AND RAILWAY GUN

"... American artillery since 21 August had begun its destructive work along Highway 7 ..."

work along Highway 7; and the increasing debris of wrecked equipment caused by both artillery and air operations compelled the Germans to seek alternative routes.

On 22 August the 36th Division had been directed by the VI Corps to, "move the 977th and the 141st Field Artillery Battalions to positions from which they can cover Montelimar and routes south in the Rhone Valley." By the close of 23 August the two battalions were in position northeast of Montelimar. The 141st Field Artillery Battalion moved into the Condillac Pass southeast of the positions of the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The 977th Field Artillery Battalion

went into position northeast of the village of Marsanne. It was not until 24 August, however, that the full artillery strength of the 36th Division was massed and organized at Montelimar.

Failure to contain the enemy initially, however, later made



GERMAN WRECKAGE ALONG HIGHWAY 7

"... increasing debris of wrecked equipment compelled the Germans to seek alternate routes ..."

it necessary to engage him on three sides. Montelimar was not captured until the end of the battle period, although numerous assaults were made on the town. The movement of the American 3rd Division into Montelimar from the south marked the end of the battle. After the town was occupied, no additional German elements were able to move into the battle area. Those who remained consisted mostly of suicide squads attempting to delay the American advance while German units withdrew across the Drome River.

Roubion River Line

The initial failure to capture Montelimar necessitated the building up of American defenses along the Roubion River Line. If the German elements could be denied the alternative routes leading east, they would have to pass along Highway 7 and be subjected to heavy artillery and small arms fire. At 1400 hours on 24 August the 36th Division issued its operational instructions. The main line of resistance was to follow the northern bank of the Roubion River from the southern slope of Hill 300 on the west to the foothills of the Pre-Alps on the extreme east. Defenses faced south, from which direction it was presumed that the greatest enemy pressure would be exerted. Defensive forces consisted of the 141st and the 142nd Infantry Regiments, one company of the 111th Engineer Battalion, one company of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, plus all the divisional artillery in support.

The extreme western end of the main line of resistance was to be used as a hinge-point from which the 141st Regiment was to make its thrusts in an attempt to cut Highway 7. As the line progressed eastward, it served to protect the southern entrance to the Condillac Pass. The chief military value of this pass was that it covered an approach to the village of La Coucourde in the Rhone Valley from the middle portion of the Roubion River Plain. Farther eastward, the main line of resistance passed through the village of Bonlieu, which divided the zone of responsibility between the 141st and 142nd Infantry Regiments. From Bonlieu the line continued eastward in the zone of the 142nd Regiment until it reached the Pre-Alps.

Artillery was in position along the ridge to the north of the Roubion Valley to supplement the defenses of the main line of resistance. The 141st Infantry Regiment on the right flank was supported by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion. The 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion remained in position along the Condillac Pass; the 131st Field Artillery Battalion moved southeast of the 59th to protect the southeastern entrance of the Condillac Pass; and the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion arrived to center its emplacements around the village of Marsanne.

The 142nd Infantry Regiment on the left flank was supported by the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion and the 93rd Field Artillery Battalion. The entire divisional main line of resistance was supported by the 977th, the 141st, and the 155th Field Artillery Battalions. The 977th and the 141st Battalions remained in their former positions, one northeast of Marsanne and the other south of the Condillac Pass. The 155th Battalion was stationed north of the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion's position so as to give supporting fire to the left flank of the divisional line.

The Operations Instructions enjoined the field artillery battalions to be, "prepared to place fire of at least one half of the artillery on roads in the Rhone Valley from Montelimar north . . . and to cover route Bourdeaux-Crest with at least one half of the artillery." Bourdeaux is on Route 538 between Crest and Nyons. These instructions indicated that, although the primary mission of the artillery was to reinforce the main line of resistance along the Roubion, it was also to be ready to cover Highway 7 north of Montelimar with fire and to prevent any enemy penetration along the eastern border of the battle area, especially toward Crest, through which ran the divisional supply line.

Although hills to the north gave good artillery observation, the entire Roubion River Valley was excellent tank country. During this season the river was low; and the surrounding ground was firm and open, cut only here and there by hedges.

On 24 August a copy of the Operations Instructions of the 36th Division fell into the hands of the enemy. Not only were the Germans forewarned as to the steps being taken to trap them, but the attached overlay indicated that Bonlieu was the weak spot in the main line of resistance. The 36th Division was now too heavily committed to change its battle plans, and only later would it be known what use the enemy would make of his acquired information.

In front of the village of Bonlieu a composite company of the 111th Engineer Battalion was spread out along a line over 3,000 yards in length. This unit consisted of Company A, less one platoon, and one platoon from Company C with a provisional platoon from Headquarters

and Service Company. At 1600 hours on 25 August a German unit of company strength, supported by two tanks, launched an attack preceded by infiltration tactics against Bonlieu. Covered by fire from the tanks, infantry crossed the river and forced the engineers back several hundred yards. This original enemy success was followed by another assault which completely destroyed any defensive line which the engineers might hope to maintain. A battalion of German infantry, supported by six Mark VI tanks, attacked toward Marsanne and completely severed the Roubion defense line.

The 1st Battalion of the 143rd Infantry Regiment was ordered from near Marsanne into the gap. On the following day, 26 August, as the 1st Battalion of the 143rd Regiment moved in to close the western segment of the breakthrough, the 1st Battalion of the 142nd Regiment moved to the south-west from near Puy St. Martin to the defense of the threatened sector. Again the Germans attacked the defense line at Bonlieu. Lack of mortars, temporary absence of air support, and the unfavorable defensive terrain were largely responsible for German successes in breaking through the American lines. Large numbers of German personnel and quantities of equipment were able on 25-26 August to enter the battle square and head northward toward the Drome River.

The German breakthrough at Bonlieu had completely severed contact between the 141st Regiment on the west flank and the 142nd Regiment on the east. The composite company from the 111th Engineers had been relieved from the battered line late on 25 August. By the morning of 27 August the original main line of resistance had been restored by the 1st Battalion of the 143rd Infantry and the 1st Battalion of the 142nd Infantry, and the Germans had been stopped from using the Roubion River Valley as an alternate route to the Drome.

Two regiments of the German 198th Infantry Division were identified in the order of battle during operations against the Roubion River line during 25-26 August. On 25 August the 326th Infantry Regiment spearheaded the attack, and the 305th Infantry Regiment followed the next day. Six Mark VI tanks were apparently attached to each regiment, and so skillfully were these tanks camouflaged that the

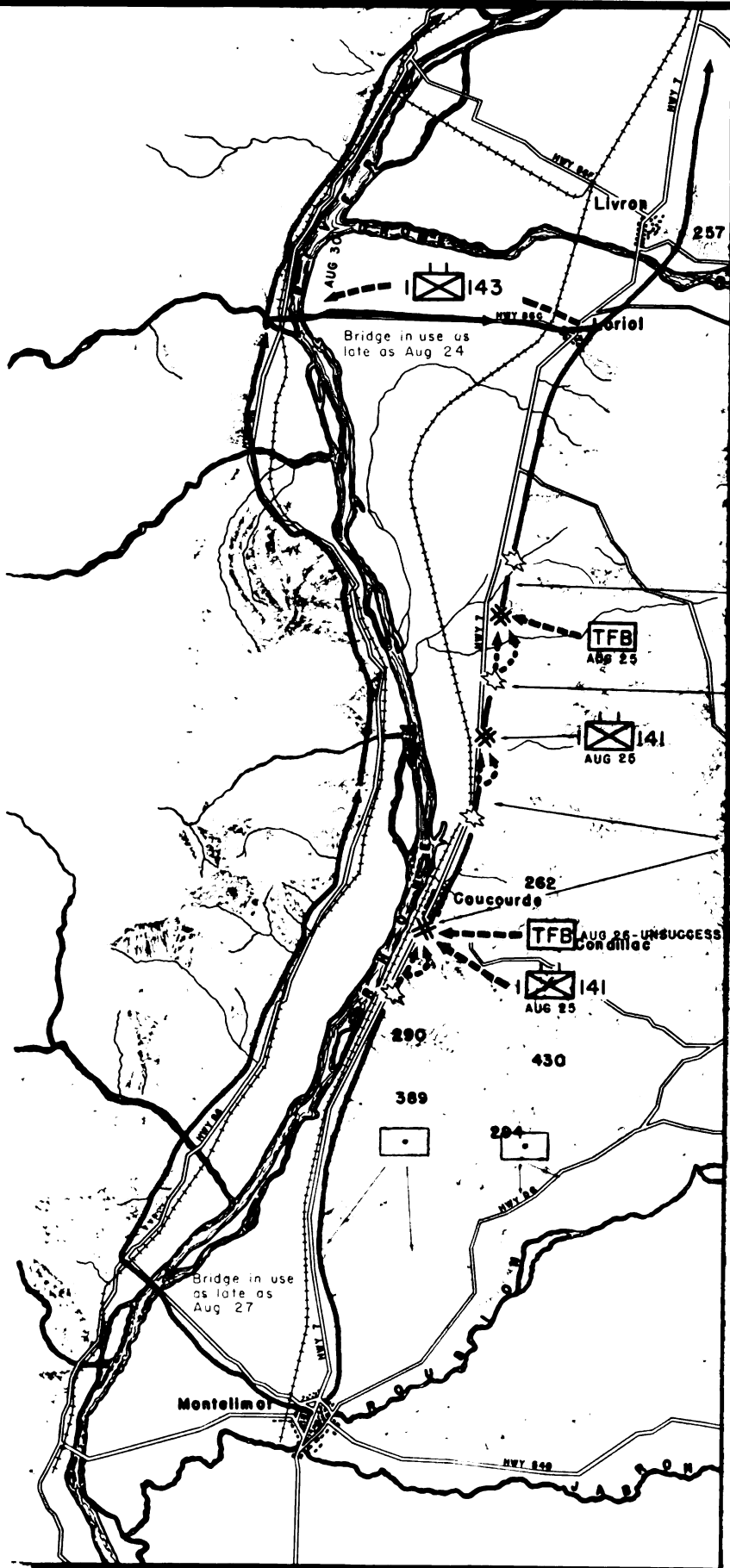
American artillery observers, along the ridges north of the river, experienced great difficulty in identifying the targets. Exactly what German elements slipped through the Bonlieu gap during the rupture of the American defensive line, it is impossible to establish. Interrogation of prisoners indicated that a part of the 11th Panzer Division and portions of the 198th Infantry Division availed themselves of this opportunity to escape.

Blocking of Highway 7

The blocking of Highway 7 was one of the primary missions of the 36th Division when it arrived in the Rhone Valley from Grenoble. By a division order at 1915 hours on 22 August, the 141st Infantry Regiment was directed to set up a roadblock north of Montelimar. The 141st Regiment was unable to comply with the order, since the Germans had the area under intense artillery fire.

Efforts to establish a roadblock were not resumed until after the initial failure to capture the town of Montelimar. On the morning of 25 August Task Force Butler attempted to put in a roadblock on Highway 7 near the village of Saulce-sur-Rhone north of La Coucourde. However, because of overwhelming enemy pressure, the venture failed. Later on the same day a second attempt was made by the 141st Regiment, some two and a half miles south of Saulce-sur-Rhone. This effort was also unsuccessful.

Late on 25 August a third attempt was made by the 141st Regiment to block Highway 7 at the village of La Coucourde. This block was protected by a platoon of infantry, six tank destroyers, and three tanks. Enemy armor, supported by infantry, broke through; and the position had to be abandoned. On the following day Task Force Butler was instructed by the 36th Division to, "alert your whole force for immediate movement to counterattack, seize, and restore block on Highway 7 at La Coucourde. Attack by way of Marsanne-Condillac-Coucourde." Although Task Force Butler had moved northward through the Condillac Pass and had reached Highway 7 by 0630, the highway had not been cut by 1200 hours, 27 August. One battalion of infantry



and one company of medium tanks, supported by two battalions of artillery, failed to stop the German thrusts of tanks and infantry.

The mission of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion was changed and directed exclusively into the Rhone Valley in the vicinity of



IMMOBILIZED GERMAN CONVOY

"... enemy convoys had been under constant artillery fire since 21 August ..."

Condillac, adding weight to battery fire already adjusted on the highway. This marked the beginning of the artillery's tremendous destruction of the enemy who was endeavoring to escape northward along Highway 7; and, since the enemy provided so many targets, the batteries of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion had to be separated into platoons in order to fire the maximum number of fire missions. At one period of the day the battalion was firing seven separate missions at once. Even this method was inadequate, so an individual gun was hauled to the top of a hill, to one of the company observation posts; and direct fire was brought to bear on the roads and railroad below.

By 2130 hours on 27 August the 1st Battalion of the 141st Infantry Regiment reported that a roadblock had been created by wrecked enemy vehicles, put out of action by American artillery firing from the hills east of the highway. German tanks and motor transports were attempting to by-pass the barrier of debris along Highway 7 in order to reach the Drome River. Between Montelimar and Loriol enemy convoys had been under constant artillery fire and air attack since 21 August.

There was not enough artillery ammunition available to inflict all the damage that could be done, despite the fact that ammunition trains hauled day and night. Within battalions and between battalions, ammunition was shifted from one unit to another in order to have it available for the most remunerative targets. Every available man carried shells from one gun to another, and between batteries, jeeps and weapons carriers were called into service. On 26 August the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion had scored direct hits on a train of 55 cars in the Rhone Valley. Enough damage was caused to prevent further movement of the train. Two other trains, blocked by the wreckage, became targets for other artillery battalions in position farther south. All three trains were eventually captured with their contents, which included five large railway guns.

Highway 86, on the west bank of the Rhone River, was a less desirable escape route than Highway 7 on the east bank. The road on the west bank is narrow, exceedingly curved, and clings to the steeply rising crags which in many places project almost into the river. However, as American pressure against German traffic on the east bank increased, more and more traffic had to be routed over Highway 86.

As late as 27-28 August two important bridges across the Rhone River were still being used by the Germans in their retreat toward Lyon. The location of these bridges permitted a portion of the German traffic to avoid the more direct fire of American artillery and to free itself from the necessity of having to force its way through American roadblocks on Highway 7.

One bridge was about two miles west of Montelimar. A main route led directly out of town to the bridge and across to the western

bank of the Rhone River. With the Germans still in control of Montelimar they could divert traffic to the other bank. The second bridge across the Rhone was near the mouth of the Drome, at the extreme end of the battle area. Since the bridge was out of range of American artillery and since the Drome River could be forded at many points, the Germans diverted considerable military traffic from the west bank to the east.

The harassing activities of the FFI upon German traffic moving northward along the western bank and the periodic shelling by American artillery from across the river were insufficient to do more than disrupt traffic for short periods. The failure to deny the enemy the use of the two bridges across the Rhone allowed the Germans to exploit the tactical advantage of possessing an alternative escape route.

Control of the hill masses to the north and the northeast of Montelimar was the key to the developing tactical situation. Since the supply line of the 36th Division came into the battle area from the northeast, enemy control of the hill masses represented a potential threat. Condillac Pass served not only as a route of communication between the Roubion Valley and Highway 7 at La Coucourde, but also as a base for operations against the hill masses to the southwest of the pass. The Condillac Pass was constantly threatened from the north by enemy activities along Highway 7, and from the south by armored thrusts along the Roubion River Valley. It was this lack of an adequate base from which to operate that accounted for the difficulties of securing control of the hill masses.

The 3rd Battalion of the 141st Regiment was concerned with the protection of the main regimental supply line that ran diagonally southwest from Crest. Holding a position at the south entrance of the Condillac Pass, it was under German pressure from the direction of Bonlieu and the Roubion Valley. The 2nd Battalion operated out of the Condillac Pass and directed its efforts toward attacks on the town of Montelimar to the southwest. The 1st Battalion was concerned chiefly with efforts to block Highway 7 immediately north of La Coucourde.

Each of the three battalions received constant enemy pressure during the entire period of the battle of Montelimar. The enemy's partial control of the high ground to the east of Highway 7 prevented the 141st

Regiment from fully accomplishing its tactical mission. Enemy success in penetrating the main line of resistance placed elements of the 11th Panzer Division and the 198th Infantry Division between the extended position of the 2nd Battalion along the Roubion River and its communications base at Condillac Pass. Only after prolonged and intense fighting was the battalion able to move northward and regain contact on 25 August.

It was not until the American 3rd Division reached Montelimar from the south, on 28 August, that the 141st Regiment was actually able to complete its assigned mission. On that date the 141st Regiment seized control of the hilltops and drove to the south across the Roubion River to overcome the remaining German resistance in the area. On 28 August the village of Montelimar was occupied by American forces. The tactical situation now demanded that efforts be made to halt the enemy before he could complete crossing of the Drome River. Operations along the Drome River represented the final phase of the Battle of Montelimar.

Crossing the Drome

The Drome River was the last barrier in the German retreat northward to Lyon. The river represented an important axis of communication and supply for all American forces in the battle area. In order to protect this northern flank, the 143rd Regiment was sent from Grenoble southwest to Bourg-de-Peage, a town between 20 and 25 miles north of Crest. From this point troops could be moved quickly to the defense of Crest on the Drome.

Bonlieu was the weak link along the main line of resistance, as the Germans knew from the captured Operations Instructions, so it was assumed that Crest would be their northern objective in any drive toward the Drome River from the south. On 24 August the Commanding Officer of the 143rd Regiment was notified to, "remain at Bourg-de-Peage . . . be prepared to move on Crest on short notice." Later in the same day when the threat to Crest became more apparent, this warning was supplemented by, "you must have the bulk of your force (at least one

infantry battalion plus all tank destroyers and artillery) in Crest by daylight, 25 August."

To increase the strength of the American defenses at Crest and along the Drome River, the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion was sent to this area. Tank destroyers went into position on both sides of the bridge across the Drome at Crest, and roadblocks were set up to the north and northeast of town. The Commanding General of the 36th Division instructed the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion to hold the roadblocks as long as possible in the event of an attack. If forced by the enemy, the entire battalion was to fall back on Crest and hold "to the last." As a last resort, the bridges across the Drome at Crest were to be destroyed.

Although the enemy made serious threats to the town of Crest, the restoration of the line at Bonlieu on 27 August tended to diminish the pressure. Throughout the entire period between 22 and 30 August the enemy did not cease to probe for crossings over the Drome. In the latter stages of the battle, efforts were shifted more and more toward the western portion of the river near the town of Lorient.

The village of Allex lies north of the Drome midway between Crest and the Rhone River. The 2nd Battalion of the 157th Infantry Regiment, which had been sent into the Montelimar battle area to reinforce the 36th Division, occupied the town of Allex by 2000 hours, 26 August. German activity to the north and west was reported. However, by 1200 hours on the following day the Germans had completely withdrawn, allowing the 2nd Battalion to establish and maintain roadblocks on three sides of the town. The Commanding General of the VI Corps ordered the 157th Regiment not to "press its advance toward Livron at the expense of making secure Crest and Allex."

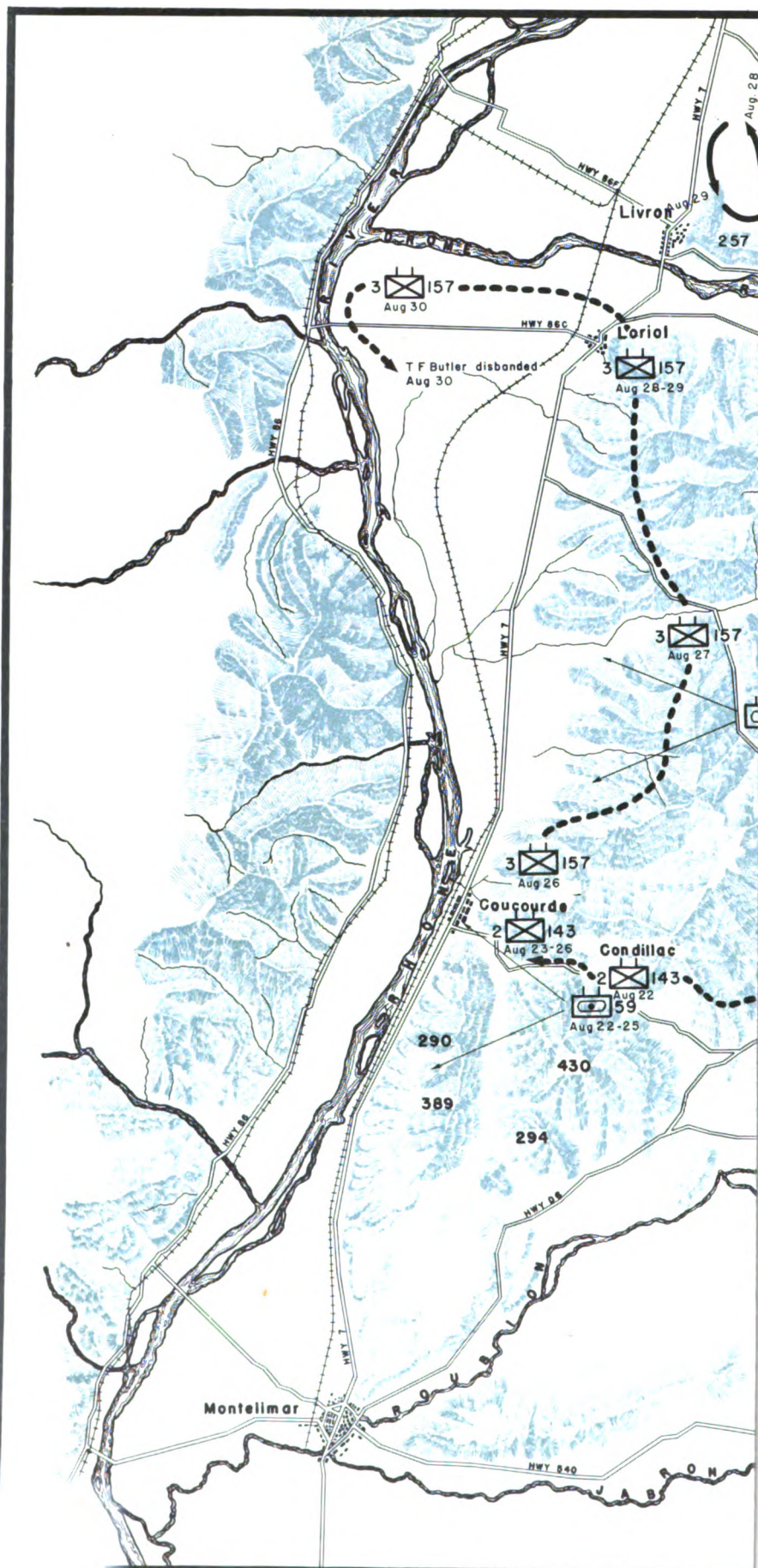
By 27 August, American forces had progressed a considerable distance westward along the northern edge of the battle square, thus narrowing the German zone of escape across the Drome. At the end of the battle period, crossings were confined to a section of the river which did not extend more than six or seven miles upstream from its confluence with the Rhone.

Closing this one remaining escape route of the German Nineteenth Army across the Drome required the use of air support to harass enemy traffic, to destroy bridges, and to demolish fording sites. As late as 25 August a main highway and railroad bridge were still being used by the Germans. On this date both bridges were knocked out by American artillery or air power. But since the Drome was fordable at most points during the month of August, the Germans utilized four fording sites in the vicinity of Highway 7. Two of these crossings were west of the railroad bridge, another between the railroad and highway bridge, and the last about 2,000 yards east of Highway 7. Enemy tanks crossed on railroad ties laid on top of crushed stone and gravel. Other heavy equipment which was unable to cross under its own power was winched over.

German fording activities were temporarily interrupted late on 27 August. On 26 August the river was at a low stage, but a thunderstorm in the mountains created a sudden flood, and for several hours all German traffic was stalled on the south bank. Immobile columns of vehicles offered increased opportunities for American artillery and air power, and a heavy toll was taken.

On 27 August the Commanding General of the Seventh Army requested that all possible air support be brought to bear against the Germans crossing the Drome. Although the German retreat from the battle zone was hurried, there existed the same degree of careful planning which had been evident throughout the previous eight days. Immediately to the north of the village of Loriol the Germans concentrated all their mobile equipment in a large assembly area. Traffic could then be diverted to the several fording sites as the tactical situation permitted. The 110th Grenadier Regiment of the German 11th Panzer Division was charged with moving equipment and personnel across the Drome River.

Since the westward advance of the American 157th Regiment at Alex constituted a threat to any German movement across the lower reaches of the river, the 110th Grenadier Regiment effectively covered German movements by offering strong resistance along roads leading west and northwest out of Alex. Later, elements of this regiment moved



to the northwest above the village of Livron to assist in the final phases of the crossings. By daylight of 28 August the major part of the German 11th Panzer Division was able to cross the Drome and move out toward the city of Lyon.

During the period 26-28 August intensive efforts were being made by VI Corps to close off the German movement. On 28 August the 157th Infantry Regiment, under the command of Brigadier General John H. Church, was instructed to, "extend vigorous reconnaissance and follow-up action from Crest, along the north side of the Drome River, through Livron to the Rhone." On the following day, the 36th Division



LIVRON

"... the 2nd Battalion took up positions on the high ground to the east ..."

instructed the 142nd Regiment to, "move with all possible speed via Crest to Allex, and push west to Highway 7 to cut off the retreating enemy." Although the weight of these two American regiments was engaged in this final effort to close off Highway 7 and the Drome River

crossing, so stubborn was the German resistance that Livron was not reached until 28 August. On this date the 3rd Battalion of the 142nd Regiment arrived northwest of the village, and the 2nd Battalion took up positions on the high ground to the east. At 1015 hours, 28 August, Livron was completely surrounded by the 142nd Regiment, and Highway 7 was at last blocked. It was now possible to cover the Drome River crossings with artillery fire, but unfortunately the great bulk of the enemy had already crossed.

On 27 and 28 August, more and more artillery was directed upon enemy movement up the Rhone Valley. The "long toms" of the 977th Field Artillery Battalion were directed upon the crossings of the Drome River near its confluence with the Rhone. In this area, between the villages of Loriol and Livron, these long range guns knocked out the railroad bridge, the highway bridge, and destroyed the ford which was being used by the Germans on the route of withdrawal. At the same time, the 133rd, the 59th, the 93rd, the 155th, and the 141st Field Artillery Battalions were firing into enemy traffic on the main highway, and on the secondary roads leading north of these river crossings.

On 28 August the artillery was shifted northward to intercept further enemy withdrawals up the Rhone north of the Drome. The 132nd Field Artillery Battalion moved to positions near Alex, to support the infantry attack on Livron and at the same time take the German transport under fire in the Rhone Valley. In order to get advantageous positions, artillery troops went into action in the infantry area where they received casualties from small arms and mortar fire. The next day these positions proved excellent ones from which to fire upon the Germans in the valley.

By that time the infantry had taken Livron, from which place the liaison officers of the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion secured good observation on the vehicle-packed roads in the valley. It was an "artilleryman's dream", since the enemy columns of armor, trucks, horse-drawn guns and carts, as well as personnel, as they came through the narrow bottleneck and forded the Drome River, were exposed to the constant pounding from American artillery. These observers fired the 132nd Field Artillery Battalion almost continuously, and also used C Battery

of the 155th, which had moved north. It was estimated that in this location alone the 132nd Battalion caused the destruction or abandonment of 500 vehicles and 50 artillery pieces.

After numerous attempts by Task Force Butler to block Highway 7 by means of infantry attacks from the lower ridges of Hill 300 and artillery fire from the high ground in the Marsanne Forest, the final decision was to capture the town of Loriol.

Loriol is situated on the lowland formed by the confluence of the Drome with the Rhone. Artillery placed along high ground east of Loriol would command the village, Highway 7, and all the fording sites



VEHICLES CAUGHT BY ARTILLERY ON OUTSKIRTS OF MONTELMAR

" . . . It was an 'artilleryman's dream' . . . Columns of armor, trucks, horse drawn carts and guns, as well as personnel, were exposed to the constant pounding of American artillery . . . "

across the Drome. The 1st Battalion of the 143rd Regiment was to attack Loriol from the high ground east of the village. Once the town had been captured, protective roadblocks could be set up; and the main

body of the 143rd Regiment could join up with the elements of the 141st Regiment that were still operating along Highway 7 opposite Hill 300. The 753rd Tank Battalion was to support the infantry attack. The 117th Reconnaissance Squadron would protect the eastern flank of the operation by patrolling along the southern bank of the Drome, from Loriol eastward to the town of Crest. The 93rd Armored Field Artillery and the 141st Field Artillery Battalions were in direct support of the infantry in their advance against Loriol.

The tanks of the 753rd Tank Battalion approached Loriol by moving along a wooded trail paralleling Highway 7 and bordering the



RESULTS OF AMERICAN FIRE POWER

" . . . Task Force Butler had a field day firing at traffic to the west of the roads . . . "

western ridge of the Marsanne Hills. By 1530 hours, 28 August, the main body of Task Force Butler had reached the high ground east of Loriol and reported, "having a field day firing at traffic to the west of the roads. No infantry opposition to speak of." German troops in Loriol

defended the town in order to shield the retreat of the last elements making their escape northward across the Drome. However, tanks wedged in north of the town; Loriol was tactically isolated and all organized resistance collapsed on 29 August. At 0915 hours on the following day the 1st Battalion of the 143rd Regiment reached the junction of the Drome with the Rhone River. The battle area was at last securely closed, and the Battle of Montelimar came to an end.

While the 36th Division was endeavoring to block the German escape route between Montelimar and the Drome River, the American 3rd Division was pushing the enemy up from the south. With all



WRECKAGE OF GERMAN CONVOY

" . . . Germans . . . were forced to pass through the fire of the blocking force . . . "

avenues of escape from the rear sealed off, the Germans, following the northward course of the Rhone Valley, were forced to pass through the fire of the blocking force.

In retreating northward the German Nineteenth Army suc-

ceeded in maintaining a distance of from 12 to 18 miles between its own forces and the advance elements of the 3rd Division. By the evening of 27 August the 3rd Division had reached the vicinity of Montelimar from Orange. A "daylight line" was established for the final drive into Montelimar on the following day. This line extended along an east-west axis paralleling the entire southern border of the battle square and cut across Highway 7 a half mile south of the town. The three regiments of the division approached the battle zone with the 15th Regiment on the extreme west, the 30th Regiment in the center of the divisional formation, and the 7th Regiment on the extreme east flank.



ABANDONED GERMAN EQUIPMENT

" . . . left behind by the enemy were destroyed vehicles, guns, and heavy equipment, which reflected the eight days of heavy fighting . . . "

The final drive into Montelimar on 28 August caught only scattered rear-guard elements. The 15th and 30th Regiments advanced straight northward across the "daylight line", while the 7th Regiment

turned westward to reach the Rhone River. By the end of the day enemy resistance in the town of Montelimar had ended, and all stragglers were picked up. The 3rd Division, in the movement from the south, had forced the German Nineteenth Army into the Montelimar battle area; but the American blocking force was not strong enough to entirely prevent the enemy from breaking out. By the end of August the Germans had succeeded in withdrawing the greater part of their personnel north of the Drome River; but left behind were destroyed vehicles, guns, and heavy equipment, which reflected the eight days of heavy fighting. The destruction of enemy equipment by American field artillery units



KNOCKED OUT ENEMY HALFTRACK

" . . . Destroyed German equipment was found not only along the main highways, but also on minor routes and trails . . . "

was estimated to include between 2,000 and 3,000 vehicles, over 80 artillery pieces, and five large caliber railroad guns. Destroyed German equipment was found not only along the main highways, but also on

minor routes and trails. The enemy had neglected no avenue of escape in his haste to cross the battle area to the north of the Drome River. Each route and assembly area seemed to have been covered at one time or another by some unit of American artillery.

Supply Difficulties

During the eight day Battle of Montelimar the supply route from the battle square to the beaches by way of the Grenoble Corridor remained tenuous and was frequently threatened by enemy action. At no time during the period was the quantity of supplies brought into the battle area sufficient to satisfy actual needs.

The 36th Division supply dump was located at Aspres, a town in the Grenoble Corridor, 165 miles by road from the D-Day landing beaches. From Aspres the supply route progressed northwest along Highway 93 to the town of Crest, a distance of 70 miles. From Crest the routes fanned out in several different directions in accordance with the tactical situation. However, the chief axis of supply was to the southwest from Crest across a diagonal into Condillac Pass, some five or six miles northeast of Montelimar. The German breakthrough at Bonlieu on 25 August necessitated the temporary switching of the supply route to Highway 94, from Serres south of Aspres west to Nyons, then northwest into the battle area. Even this highway was at times threatened by enemy penetrations, since the Germans were seeking eastward routes of escape to avoid encirclement at Montelimar. There was also some enemy activity near the roadblock set up by the 142nd Infantry Regiment on Highway 94 at Nyons.

On 25 August the Germans established a roadblock on Highway 538 south of Crest which complicated further the problem of supply routes. This was the main supply line that connected Crest with the village of Marsanne at the southern end of the Condillac Pass. For a short time all supplies had to be transported over mountain roads, until this roadblock was knocked out by American tanks.

The scarcity of supplies was due mainly to the distances over which ammunition, rations, and gasoline had to be moved. Pre-D-Day

Allied bombing had destroyed important railroad bridges along the Grenoble Corridor, so that all supplies had to be trucked from the landing beaches to the divisional dump at Aspres. From Aspres supplies were further distributed by truck to the various units in the Montelimar area. The battle area was 235 miles by road from the Riviera coast, and the supply haul required a round trip of 470 miles.

Gasoline, food, and ammunition were the critical items during the Battle of Montelimar. Priorities and rationing had to be put into effect. Top priority on gasoline was given to the tank and tank destroyer battalions. Troops were placed on " $\frac{2}{3}$ rations" for the battle period. Artillery units were forced to "pass up" excellent targets because of the ammunition shortage.

The expenditure of ammunition is a gauge of the work done by the artillery in the Battle of Montelimar from 23 to 30 August 1944. The three battalions of light artillery fired 35,775 rounds of ammunition, and the medium battalion fired 1,890 rounds, making an overall total of 37,665 rounds. However, this is not an accurate figure, because this report includes only the four organic units of the division artillery. Four other battalions were also attached to the division, and their total number of guns was more than that of the organic artillery. It can be assumed that they fired at least half the number of rounds as that of the organic artillery.

The demand for artillery ammunition always far exceeded the supply. On 26 August the 36th Division had on hand 100 rounds per gun for the 105 mm howitzers, 125 rounds per gun for the 155 mm howitzers, and 78 rounds per gun for the "long toms." The next day the pro-rata reserve was 132 rounds for each light artillery piece, 138 rounds for each medium artillery piece, and 44 rounds for each 155 mm gun. By 27 August the ammunition supply had become so low that the Commanding General of the 36th Division ordered, "If a low of 25 rounds per gun is reached, cease firing at once except in the case of a dire emergency. Shoot at remunerative targets only."

The account of the 59th Field Artillery Battalion describes the ammunition supply problem in relation to the tactical situation:

On 22 August three German columns fanned out simultaneously toward Sauzet, Cleon, and Puy-St. Martin (towns along the Roubion River), hitting up from the south. Another came toward us at Condillac Pass from the northwest, and still another came from Crest There were numerous excellent targets of opportunity to be fired upon, but they had to be passed up because of the extremely low ammunition supply. The ammunition train could not be expected for another 48 hours; General Butler (Commanding Task Force Butler) ordered that when each gun was down to 75 rounds, no more would be fired without his permission. This was a precautionary measure against any possible enemy counterattack. As a result, ammunition was used very sparingly and then only at extremely juicy targets or those targets which could not be handled by smaller caliber weapons.

Commenting on the long supply haul, the narrative continues, "During the period from 22 August to 29 August the battalion ammunition train made four round trips to the beach at Ste. Maxime, each trip 470 miles."

The Second Attempt at Encirclement

Though the German High Command was successful in breaking through the Montelimar trap and withdrawing the greater portion of its forces north of the Drome River, there still remained another opportunity for the Americans to intercept the enemy before he could reach the Belfort Gap. The Seventh Army Field Order No. 4, 28 August, set forth the final directives for destroying the German Nineteenth Army before it could withdraw to the "West Wall." French Army B was directed to proceed northward along the west bank of the Rhone River and to assist in the capture of the city of Lyon. The American VI Corps was to advance due north on an axis Lyon-Beaune-Dijon. The joint action of the Americans and French would constitute the effective encirclement of the city of Lyon.

The General axis of advance would continue northward, since Beaune and Dijon were located almost due north of Lyon. However, Dijon was situated almost due west of the entrance to the Belfort Gap; and many German elements were expected to turn eastward upon reaching Lyon in order to take the most direct route to the Belfort Gap and the Rhine. Should the Seventh Army be successful in effecting a rapid

advance toward Dijon to join with Allied elements pushing southeast from Normandy, a large portion of the German Nineteenth Army would be "sealed off" and prevented from reaching the Rhine.

The Commanding General of the VI Corps ordered the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron to act as a screening force and to maintain contact with the retreating enemy. The 45th Division was immediately ordered to advance northwest from Grenoble to cut across the axis connecting the City of Lyon with the border of Switzerland. The 36th Division was to continue its advance northward from the Montelimar battle area toward Lyon, and the 3rd Division was to mop up the remaining enemy elements in the Montelimar area. Finally, Task Force Butler, having completed the capture of Loriol along the Drome River, was to move eastward to Crest where it was to be disbanded.

The principle maneuvering element for this shearing operation of the Seventh Army was the 179th Infantry Regiment of the 45th Division. Advance patrols of the 179th Regiment exploited rapidly to the northwest from Grenoble. By 27 August the 179th Infantry had occupied the town of Bourgoin, midway between Grenoble and Lyon. The 179th Regiment continued to advance to the north and by 21 August had arrived at Pont D'Ain, which is midway between Lyon and the Swiss border. The occupation of Pont D'Ain cut off Lyon from the northeast. Roadblocks were established on all roads radiating east from Lyon, and the direction of retreat of the German Nineteenth Army was forced farther northward.

There still remained elements of five divisions of the German Nineteenth Army; the 11th Panzer, the 189th, the 198th, the 338th, and the 716th Divisions. All were using the upper Rhone Valley as an escape route. The 716th Division and part of the 189th had avoided the Montelimar trap by moving to the north on the west side of the Rhone. The other divisions, at least in large part, had infiltrated through the American trap at Montelimar. By 27 August the bulk of the 11th Panzer Division had crossed the Drome River and was well on its way to Lyon. The slower infantry divisions, however, were still south of the city of Lyon as late as 30 August.

Destruction of mobile equipment considerably slowed down the rate of retreat of the German divisions. On 30 August 200 enemy vehicles were observed moving across the Isere River, north of Valence in the Rhone Valley. Of this total, 75 percent were horse drawn. In his haste to clear Lyon the enemy was moving his forces by day and night; columns of traffic made a profitable target for Allied air power and the FFI. It appeared that the enemy was attempting to increase the speed of evacuation and to salvage as much personnel and equipment as possible from southern France.

In its retreat from southern France the German Nineteenth Army not only protected its withdrawal northward into Lyon but also succeeded in rounding the Swiss border to the northeast of Lyon by the clever use of armor in screening its turning movement. By using the Swiss border as a hinge and by protecting his extreme right or western flank against encirclement, the enemy was able to swing his entire column to the northeast toward the Belfort Gap and ultimately reach the Rhine.

Air Support

The XII Tactical Air Command gave direct support to the ground operations of the Seventh Army in southern France. During the two week period beginning with D-Day this aerial support was directed against three specific objectives: 1) To cause maximum destruction of enemy defenses in the assault area. 2) To isolate the battle area by destroying the remaining rail and highway bridges across the Rhone and other rivers. 3) To attack enemy troop movements.

The main objective of American aerial bombardment during the days prior to the invasion, and on invasion day itself, was the fixed defenses in southern France. As American forces moved inland, the tactical mission of air support changed. Bombing of enemy communication lines and troop movements was now given priority, since the German Nineteenth Army had retreated far beyond its own line of fixed defenses. By D-Day only one bridge across the Rhone at Avignon remained open for enemy use. Traffic southward from the City of Lyon

toward the beachhead area had also been interdicted by aerial activity. Routes from southern France eastward into Italy through the Alpine Passes or along the Riviera were severed by operations of the XII Tactical Air Command.

The German ground forces worked feverishly to restore bridges and routes of communication. By 17 August, two days after the Seventh Army had landed, the route southward from Lyon on Highway 7 had been re-opened. The railroad paralleling the Riviera coastal route into Italy was operating for one way traffic. The Rhone River bridge at Orange and the Drome River bridge at Livron were being repaired for the second time. Eleven days later, on 28 August, the Germans were able to restore partially three Rhone River bridges for limited use; but the railroad line between southern France and northwestern Italy had again been cut by American aerial bombardment.

By the beginning of the second week of American operations in southern France there was a fundamental modification in the objectives of the XII Tactical Air Command. It was realized that further wide spread destruction of rail and highway communications would be of greater disadvantage to the rapidly advancing American Seventh Army than to the retreating German Nineteenth Army. Tactical progress and the supply build-up of the Seventh Army were at times held up by bridges or stretches of road which had been destroyed a few days previously by American air power. Since the possibility of new emergency elements being brought into the battle area was remote, the XII Tactical Air Command abandoned the bombing of strategic communication lines and concerned itself with blocking future enemy escape routes or close cooperation with the ground forces in specific tactical missions. Finally, because of the rapid advance of the Seventh Army and the sabotage efforts of the FFI, aerial activity was given over exclusively to "day to day" actions as indicated by the immediate situation on the ground.

From 21 to 28 August the Tactical Air Command flew 3,299 effective sorties in southern France and dropped 1,907 tons of bombs. Of this tonnage, 851 tons were dropped on lines of communications, and 953 tons on enemy concentrations on the ground. However, from 29

August to 4 September the Air Command flew 1,303 effective sorties and dropped only 50 tons of bombs. This reduction in sorties flown and bomb tonnage dropped reflected the shift in emphasis from so-called strategic bombing to isolated tactical bombing. The factor of distance from air bases also played an important part in the relative decline of aerial activity during the latter part of August.

The tactics employed in the battle of Montelimar made the problem of air support very complex. Direct air support consisted primarily of strafing individual groups of enemy personnel and equipment and of destroying enemy communications, such as bridges, highways, and firing sites. To achieve these ends, and as a safeguard to friendly forces, periodic bomb safety lines were established. These bomb safety lines set forth the bounds behind which American planes should not bomb or strafe because of the presence of friendly ground troops. However, there was always a time lag between a change in the tactical situation and new modifications in the bomb safety lines. Should the ground forces effect a sudden breakthrough against the enemy, as often occurred, friendly troops were likely to overrun the bomb safety line. Conversely, if the enemy should suddenly penetrate the American lines, as was the case at Bonlieu on 25 August, air support for the American ground troops could not be called upon.

When the Germans broke through at Bonlieu, the Commanding General of the 36th Division requested, "Attack on column and trucks on Montelimar road at N-985584." The response was, "air will not do it because it is inside the bomb safety line and a permanent change of the bomb line must be made if they are going to do it."

The stretch of road on Highway 7 between Montelimar and Livron offered many problems to the supporting air command. American troops were operating on the highway in and around the village of La Coucourde in the attempt to establish a roadblock. Close by, sections of the road were jammed with enemy personnel and equipment. When air support was requested, the Air Corps responded that, "there is not sufficient means of identifying friendly from enemy troops."

In view of these complicating factors of coordination between air and ground forces during the battle of Montelimar, the Air Corps placed

its main emphasis on the west bank of the Rhone and on the north bank of the Drome. American ground troops were not operating in strength on either the extreme west or north side of the battle square, and it was here that the XII Tactical Air Command concentrated its activities against retreating Germans. Aircraft of the XII Tactical Air Command and carrier-based naval aircraft operating from the Mediterranean worked, however, in as close coordination with the ground forces as the situation permitted. They added to the destruction by strafing the enemy columns on Highway 7 north of Montelimar and by bombing and strafing the columns south of the town. So remunerative were the targets developed by congested traffic and jammed vehicles behind roadblocks that, during the period of this operation, pilots "were constantly reporting all their ammunition expended on closely packed enemy vehicles". Aircraft also attacked the railroad paralleling Highway 7 and the road and railroad on the west bank of the Rhone. These attacks were so successful during the week 21-28 August that headquarters, XII Tactical Air Command, reported, "the number of MT destroyed or damaged rose to 1,402, while 263 railroad cars and 30 locomotives were hit". These excellent results were attained in a period of the most adverse conditions under which air support could be given ground forces. Elements of Task Force Butler and other combat units were pressing close to Highway 7 north of Montelimar, and bomb line restrictions continually hampered air operations.

A more definite conception of the heavy toll of enemy equipment taken by aircraft during the Montelimar operation may be derived from the statement of the XII Tactical Command Air Intelligence that, "it should be recognized that it was the brilliantly conceived and executed operation of Task Force Butler in effecting the roadblock which produced one of the finest air targets ever offered the tactical units of this command". As the attack against retreating enemy forces pushed north, air support continued its relentless pressure. On 29 August the aircraft of the XII Tactical Air Command caught 227 enemy motor transport fleeing along the Montelimar-Valence road and destroyed or damaged much of the convoy.

Prior to, and for several days after D-Day, American air

support had been based on the Island of Corsica. The minimum distance from Corsica to the invasion beaches was 140 miles; the air distance from the invasion beaches to Grenoble was 145 miles, to Lyon 195 miles. As the area of operations moved northward to Grenoble, the air distance from the Corsican bases to the site of the immediate ground operations became more than double that of D-Day. The rapid northward exploitation of the Seventh Army created a need for air bases in southern France so that air support could be more effective.

Since events had outstripped plans in southern France, temporary locations had to be selected and installations improvised so that air support could keep pace with the swiftly changing tactical situation on the ground. Within six days after the invasion six airfields were ready for operation in southern France. Some of these new airfields were nothing but fresh landing strips scraped from the vineyards. At Le Luc the airfield based two American P-47 Groups; at Sisteron four RAF Spitfire Squadrons; at Cuers three Spitfire Squadrons; at Frejus four RAF and one French Spitfire Squadron; and at Ramatuelle one RAF Spitfire Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, one American P-51 Observation Squadron, and one American P-47 Group.

It was not until September, however, that air power could be fully exploited in the operations of the Seventh Army in France. By September the rate of American advance had declined sufficiently to permit a greater degree of coordination between the air and ground forces. This also allowed for the erection of airdromes, which had a greater capacity for planes and more complete equipment for maintenance and operation. Finally, as airfields were located farther inland, more time could be spent by American air power over target areas in the Rhine Valley and in Germany proper.

Conclusions

During the 15 day period between D-Day and the end of August the German Nineteenth Army lost 57,068 men taken prisoner of war by Seventh Army units. A large number of these prisoners were taken by the French in Toulon and Marseilles. In addition to these

losses of the Nineteenth Army there were the uncounted casualties of killed and wounded. The losses for the Seventh Army for the same period totalled 2,733 killed, captured, or missing in action. This more than 20-to-1 ratio of German losses may be explained in terms of the first 15 days of operations after D-Day. The Seventh Army's rapid expansion inland coupled with the Allied breakthrough from Normandy, jeopardized the position of the German Nineteenth Army in southern France.

The German decision to pull out was made in order to forestall possible isolation and loss of routes of retreat. In the execution of this



A GROUP OF SURRENDERED NAZIS

"... The German Nineteenth Army lost 57,068 men, prisoners of war by Seventh Army units . . ."

disengaging maneuver the enemy offered resistance to the Seventh Army only to make secure its avenues of escape. Rear guards were sacrificed whenever necessary. The lack of sufficient transportation caused

thousands of stragglers to be left behind. In this dual operation of screening ahead and of blocking to the rear, large numbers of enemy personnel, particularly less desirable troops, were abandoned so that the more mobile elements would be able to withdraw. Seventh Army units sustained losses when they made contact with forward screening elements of the enemy or with rearguard groups of fanatical Germans who had been ordered to resist to the last man.

CHAPTER X

Protecting the Eastern Flank

THE Seventh Army's rapid expansion north and northwest from the invasion beaches created an ever-lengthening eastern flank, which became an increasingly important aspect of the tactical picture. After D-Day the Allied beachhead separated the German 148th Reserve Division from the main body of the Nineteenth Army, although its presence in the Cannes-Nice area remained a threat to Allied lines of communication. It was known that the 148th Division was capable of harassing the Seventh Army's right flank by limited counterattacks, but even more serious was the possibility that the Germans might send reinforcements from northern Italy through the Alpine Passes. With the screen afforded by the 148th Reserve Division, it might be possible for the enemy to build up sufficient strength to launch a major counter-attack with the object of severing Allied supply lines and overrunning beach installations.

Reported enemy motor movement southwest from Turin and west from Alessandria in the direction of the French Riviera underlined the possibility of a counterattack from the east. Between 20 and 23 August two unidentified enemy divisions were thought to be en route to southeastern France. However, the Allied High Command thought it improbable that the enemy would attempt to move significant numbers of troops through the east-west Alpine Passes. Mountainous terrain with narrow defiles and winding roads, which could be easily blocked by air power, and French resistance groups made such an undertaking too hazardous. It was more likely that the Germans considered the occupation of the Alpine Passes necessary in order to prevent any Allied

entry into northern Italy which might jeopardize the rear of General Kesselring's forces.

Field Order No. 2, issued by Seventh Army on 19 August, took into account the situation on the right flank by providing that the 1st Airborne Task Force plus certain attached units would relieve the 36th Infantry Division by 20 August and establish a general defensive line from Fayence to La Napoule, the army's eastern flank. In addition, the 1st Airborne Task Force was to reconnoiter the general line Seranon-Grasse-Cannes. Three major subordinate units were assigned operational zones in accordance with the tactical objectives involved. The 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion was given the coastal zone and ordered to advance to the approaches of Cannes. The 1st Special Service Force, on the left flank of the 509th Parachute Battalion, was to occupy defensive positions with Grasse as its ultimate objective. The 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team was to advance in the northern sector and seize St. Vallier. Other units of the 1st Airborne Task Force were assigned defensive or supporting missions.

The strategic role of this flank protection force was essentially defensive. Nevertheless, the nature of the terrain is such as to permit limited advances, though movement is very largely confined to roads. As one approaches the Franco-Italian border and crosses the Var River, closely-set, steep mountains rise sharply from the coast to heights of 5,000 feet and over from Nice to Switzerland. The Var Valley offers limited possibilities of deployment south of St. Martin du Var. But elsewhere along the Italian border rugged slopes and steep narrow valleys make movement off the roads difficult even for infantry. Nevertheless, the terrain is ideal for defensive warfare. Should the German 148th Reserve Division be driven into the passes along the Franco-Italian border, the protection of the eastern flank of the Seventh Army could be carried out with a minimum of forces.

Other circumstances dictated that German forces on the eastern flank be pushed back to the Italian border. The entire French nation attached special importance to an early liberation of Cannes and Nice. The reasons were more psychological than military, although harbor facilities at Nice would no doubt be useful.

Southern Sector

The southern sector extended from the Mediterranean coast to Larche Pass, a distance of about 60 miles. The airborne force on the eastern flank conducted the bulk of its operations within 15 miles of the coast, although a small mobile patrol was dispatched to the north to guard the roads approaching Larche Pass. As American troops crossed the Var River and advanced on Nice, an organization adequate for strong defense was dispatched to the Pass. Dispositions on the flank were modified to fill the 50-mile gap which had come to exist between the Larche Pass and the northern elements of the main body of the Airborne



NICE TOWARDS MONACO

" . . . steep mountains rise sharply from the coast to heights of 5,000 feet and over . . . "

Task Force. Elements near the coast advanced east almost to the Italian border.

The 509th Parachute Battalion and the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, reinforced by tank destroyers and engineers, con-

stituted a combat team to which was assigned the extreme southern sector of the eastern flank. Cannes was to be the first major objective. A few miles to the southwest of the city the enemy was well entrenched on the heights to the north and to the south of La Napoule and dominated the coastal road. Plans were made to attack La Napoule from two directions. The 1st Battalion, reinforced, of the 551st Parachute Infantry in support of the operation against Cannes was to attack toward La Napoule from Mandelieu on the north, while the 509th Parachute Battalion moved along the lower coastal road to attack from the southwest.

Early on the morning of 21 August the 509th was in position to attack. Preceded by a heavy artillery and mortar preparation against enemy positions on the heights, the battalion jumped off in two-company strength. By mid-day the first enemy fortified position had been taken. The battalion continued fighting throughout the following day in order to clear the enemy from the southern positions dominating the approaches to La Napoule.

Enemy artillery was at first quite active, but counter-battery fire from supporting Allied war vessels soon caused the Germans to withhold their fire. After high ground south of the town was taken La Napoule was quickly mopped up. This initial success was further exploited by an advance into the Siagne Plain and the approaches to Cannes. The 509th was now firmly established on the west bank of the Siagne River.

Meanwhile, the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion had fought its way over rugged country to reach the Les Termes-Mandelieu road to the north of La Napoule. This secured the northern flank of the 509th Parachute Battalion. Entry into Cannes was delayed until a suitable crossing could be constructed over the Siagne River. Engineers worked throughout the night of 23 August constructing a ford and clearing mine fields. Patrols, which had been sent across previously, returned with the information that the enemy had completely abandoned the city.

After clearing mines on the approaches to the city, the 509th Parachute Battalion entered Cannes at 1700 hours on 24 August. The

streets were lined with wildly-cheering people. Some were crying openly. Others threw flowers into passing American vehicles.

Time was of the utmost importance and the 509th Parachute Battalion moved straight through Cannes and eastward on to Antibes. Simultaneously, the 1st Battalion of the 551st Parachute Infantry, which



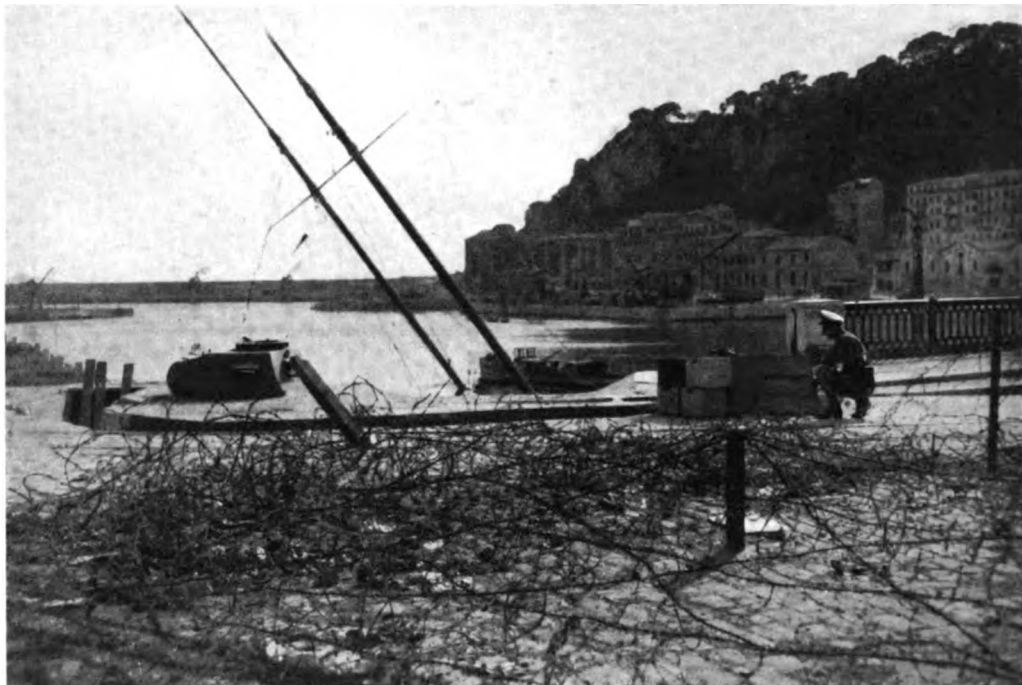
APPROACHING CANNES

"... Entry into Cannes was delayed until a suitable crossing could be constructed over the Siagne River ..."

had followed the 509th Battalion in column across the Siagne, turned north at the outskirts of the city and followed Highway 567 to Mougins. This move secured the left flank of the southern sector and established contact with the 1st Special Service Force farther north at Grasse. Throughout 25 and 26 August the 509th Battalion sent aggressive patrols to the north of Antibes toward Biot.

Pushing northwest to the Loup River on 27 August, the 509th sent out patrols to St. Laurent du Var on the west bank of the Var River.

Here numerous FFI, who had passed through the German lines, stated that the Var Valley had been evacuated by the enemy and that the city of Nice was clear. However, extensive minefields along the Var River made rapid progress difficult, though patrols moved some distance up the river in an effort to establish contact with the enemy.



A FRENCH MARINE POSTS "DANGER" SIGN AT ENTRANCE TO NICE

"... extensive minefields along the Var River made rapid progress difficult . . ."

In the last days of August, Major General Robert T. Frederick, commanding the 1st Airborne Task Force, requested permission to occupy Nice: "Conditions now existing in Nice make it urgent that the city be occupied by Allied Forces as soon as possible. Unless some show of organized Allied military strength is made within the city at this time, it is feared that riots and other civilian disturbances will reach such a scale as to seriously damage American prestige in this area." The Commanding General granted permission. On 30 August the 509th Combat Team crossed the Var River and occupied the city of Nice. One

column moved north to St. Andre immediately and established contact with the 1st Special Service Force, and the other proceeded east along the coast to Beaulieu.

Entry into the State of Monaco was forbidden to Allied troops unless the principality was "known to be actually occupied by the enemy." If that were the case, it would become necessary to cross the border in order to secure the Seventh Army's eastern flank. From their position astride the St. Andre-La Turbie road, patrols from the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion reconnoitered along the French-Monaco border. No contact was made with the enemy. A telephone communication from the FFI in Monte Carlo stated that the area around the world famous gambling resort was free of the enemy. An enemy strong-point at La Turbie, however, continued to hold out for several days despite heavy shelling from supporting Allied naval units. In a fire fight which began on 2 September, the 1st Battalion of the 551st Parachute Infantry succeeded in driving the Germans from their positions. They retreated eastward to the vicinity of St. Roche, covering their withdrawal by fighting light rear-guard actions and by an extensive use of mines to block all avenues of pursuit.

The 1st Special Service Force had been attached to the 1st Airborne Task Force on 22 August. It was assigned the central zone of the eastern flank, relieving the 2nd British Parachute Brigade, which was returned to Italy. Its first objective was the city of Grasse, which was an important road junction astride the Route Napoleon (Highway 85). The 1st and 3rd Regiments took up positions along the line of the Siagne River. The 2nd Regiment was kept in reserve.

On 23 August troops of the 1st Special Service Force began an all-out attack on Grasse, which held a strategic position with respect to the eastern flank. The 1st Regiment moved across the Siagne River and attacked the village of St. Marc. The 2nd Regiment was committed and advanced to the north through Cabris, then swung east to reach the Route Napoleon north of Grasse. St. Marc fell after a brief fire fight. At dawn on 24 August Grasse was attacked simultaneously from the north and from the southwest. Both operations were carried out successfully, and the city was occupied against relatively light resistance.

Prisoners of war stated that the enemy had been evacuating the town for the past two days and that all artillery and heavy weapons had been withdrawn to Nice.

After the capture of Grasse the next objective was the Var River, which was in itself a natural defensive line. Intelligence reports suggested that the bulk of the enemy was withdrawing eastward over the coastal highway. Late on 24 August the 2nd Regiment of the 1st Special Service Force moved to the southeast to occupy the town of Valbonne, the center of the road net in the Grasse-Cannes-Nice triangle. The 1st Regiment, following the 2nd Regiment, drove on through Valbonne east to Biot, a small village about five miles north of Antibes. This maneuver cleared the northern flank of the 509th. A new thrust a few miles north of Valbonne secured the Route Napoleon as far as Cagnes and increased the pressure effected by the 509th against the enemy withdrawing along the coast road. Throughout 26 August the enemy launched a strong counterattack near Cagnes, but was forced to retire, leaving behind 100 battle casualties and 72 prisoners.

The remaining enemy forces in the area withdrew across the Var River. When the 1st Special Service Force arrived on the west bank, it had lost contact with the enemy. On 30 August the 1st and 3rd Regiments forded the river near Colomars, and sent out patrols to the east. The general advance continued slowly until 2 September when contact was again made with the enemy. Several strongly-held German positions were subjected to air bombardment as well as artillery fire. Patrols of the 3rd Regiment moved northeast along the Sospel Valley. By now the enemy had begun to consolidate his positions farther east in the mountains and limited his activities to defensive measures.

While the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion was approaching the city of Cannes and the 1st Special Service Force was preparing its attack against Grasse, the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team moved up on the left flank of the 1st Airborne Task Force. This combat team was made up of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, and the 596th Airborne Engineer Company. After the 517th RCT had relieved elements of the 36th Infantry Division in the Fayence-Callian area, one battalion crossed the

Siagne River and occupied St. Vallier, a town on the Route Napoleon, on 24 August.

The 517th RCT regrouped on the high ground east of the St. Vallier-Grasse road for a drive to the Var River. Throughout this advance enemy activity was negligible. On 29 August the main body of the 517th RCT less one company crossed the Var River and continued east over difficult terrain. Forward patrols made contact with the enemy, but except for occasional harassing artillery fire the Germans offered little resistance. By 3 September the 517th RCT had driven the enemy into the mountains near Peira Cava.



ROAD TO DIGNE

"... The 517th RCT had been assigned the responsibility of patrolling . . . and of maintaining contact with elements of the American VI Corps in and about Digne . . ."

On 22 August the 517th RCT had been assigned the responsibility of patrolling the road net to the west and south of Larche Pass, and of maintaining contact with elements of the American VI Corps in

and about Digne. The reconnaissance platoon of the 695th Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to the 517th RCT for this purpose. Maintaining contact with the VI Corps and patrolling from the Var River to the Italian border at Larche demanded considerably more gasoline and motor vehicles than could be made available over long supply lines. However, good use was made of 1,000 gallons of gasoline and 15 vehicles which had been previously captured from the enemy by the 1st Airborne Task Force at Le Muy.

The 1st Airborne Task Force directed on 28 August that the 550 Airborne Infantry Battalion, reinforced by artillery, mortars, and tank destroyers, proceed immediately to the vicinity of Larche Pass. Allied intelligence reported that a considerable concentration of enemy troops was known to be in the area behind the pass, and it was feared that large-scale infiltration might be attempted. Since the enemy had taken up defensive positions along the Franco-Italian frontier as far as Switzerland, and since the highway through Larche Pass was sufficient to accommodate heavy traffic, the German LXXV Corps might assume an aggressive role.

A motorized patrol of 15 officers and enlisted men, in compliance with orders issued by the 1st Airborne Task Force, left Grasse on 27 August for Barcelonnette. The patrol reported that the enemy was in the process of occupying strategic passes, including Larche, in order to improve his defensive positions in the Maritime and Basses Alps. Two days later the main body of the 550th Combat Team moved to the neighborhood of Barcelonnette, where forward elements reconnoitered eastward and established temporary outposts. In this operation the French Forces of the Interior and the Inter-Allied Mission (paratroopers who had been dropped in the area weeks and even months before D-Day) were of great assistance because of their intimate knowledge of the terrain and enemy dispositions. From Barcelonnette patrols were sent out in all directions. It was soon discovered that Larche Pass was firmly held by the enemy and that the Germans were also active near Condamine and Jausiers on the highway between the pass and Barcelonnette. An air bombardment mission was requested at several

points along the Italian approaches to the Larche Pass in order to harass the enemy and complicate his supply problem.

The enemy, according to a captured field order of the German 148th Reserve Division, had anticipated the advance of the 1st Airborne Task Force and had taken steps to withdraw to the line of the Var River. This line was to be held only so long as casualties were moderate and the threat of encirclement remote, for when these conditions could no longer be satisfied the enemy expected to retire to prepared positions along the frontier. In planning the defense of the southern sector of the Allied eastern flank it was natural to assume that German counter-measures would be built around well-defended strongpoints covered by outposts and roadblocks. Along the Menton-Sospel-Breil road, the Nice-Ventimiglia highway, and at Turini Pass, the enemy had skillfully camouflaged artillery positions covering crossroads and narrow, defiladed stretches.

The German 148th Reserve Division began withdrawing from the line of the Var River on 29 August. Rear guards were left behind to yield only when pressure became great, since the main object of this delaying action was to prevent any quick Allied thrust which might be followed by the movement of artillery and heavy weapons. The Germans destroyed or damaged several fords, a highway bridge, and a railroad bridge, as they withdrew from the Var. By the end of the period the 148th Reserve Division had ceased to be a part of the German Nineteenth Army. It was subsequently incorporated into the newly formed LXXV Corps, which had the mission of defending northwest Italy against any Allied threat to the rear of German forces.

The enemy made skillful use of mines throughout this phase of withdrawal by placing them in all possible by-passes after blowing craters in the roads. Prisoner of war interrogations indicated the enemy had limited supplies, low morale, and a consequent high rate of desertion.

The crossing of the Var River and the establishment of a defensive line to the east of the Var Valley marked the opening of a new phase in the protection of the Seventh Army's eastern flank. Difficult terrain restricted maneuver and made supply problems acute. In order

that the 1st Airborne Task Force be properly organized and equipped for mountain warfare, it was decided "to make this unit into a 'light infantry division' with strength of about 10,000, and equipped largely with $\frac{1}{4}$ ton and $\frac{3}{4}$ ton trucks". The 1st Special Service Force was to remain attached to the 1st Airborne Task Force and continue to assist the protection of the Seventh Army right flank during the month of September.

The defensive plan for the southern sector of the eastern flank was contained in Field Order No. 8, issued by the 1st Airborne Task Force on 3 September. The 1st Special Service Force was ordered to the right flank of the defense line to relieve the 509th Regimental Combat Team. By 8 September the 2nd Regiment, advancing along the coast road, had entered Menton and reached the Italian border. Here the advance stopped, for it was anticipated that the northward advance of the Fifth and Eighth Armies across the Po Valley might cause the German armies in northern Italy to seek an escape route by way of the Franco-Italian frontier.

Meanwhile, the 1st Regiment of the 1st Special Service Force moved up to occupy the high ground west of the Castillon-Menton road on the afternoon of 8 September. The 3rd Regiment, having advanced against isolated enemy resistance, established roadblocks to the east and north of Castillon. As Special Service Force troops pulled up to the Italian border, the airborne division ordered this line to be held without advancing beyond. Here the enemy counterattacked at several places, but, except for a position on high ground northeast of Menton which was temporarily lost, he was unable to dislodge holding forces from their positions.

Because of difficulties of the terrain the 1st Special Service Force was compelled to resort to patrolling, raiding, and generally improving its defensive positions. Engineers went to work improving roads so that supplies could be brought up more easily. Jeep trails had to be constructed in order to reach inaccessible outposts and gun positions, and cableways were improvised for bringing up supplies. The ever-increasing distance to dumps and supply points in the Marseille area constantly over-taxed organic transportation.

On 4 September the 517th RCT had moved to the left flank of the 1st Special Service Force, in compliance with Field Order No. 8 of the 1st Airborne Task Force. Its objective was the establishment of a defensive line on the heights east of Sospel to control the Menton-Breil-Turin highway. By 11 September all three battalions were on the line, and the 2nd Battalion began an attack against an enemy strongpoint on the approaches to Sospel. From their positions in the pass the Germans controlled the roads in the Sospel Valley. It was clearly impractical to carry out a general assault on the town of Sospel. Enemy positions in and about the town were considered strong, and artillery and mortar fire from the nearby mountains made any large scale infantry movement difficult. The 517th Regimental Combat Team made slow progress throughout most of September in the face of determined German resistance and counterattacks. German artillery continued to shell all important roads leading to the Italian border, as the enemy withdrew into mountain fastnesses.

A gap of approximately 50 miles existed between Larche Pass and the sector occupied by the 517th RCT. The reinforced 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, which had operated along the coast in the capture of Cannes and Antibes, had been shifted to the north to fill this gap under order of the 1st Airborne Task Force. Here, on the long mountain reaches of the eastern flank, the Germans had merely to cross the Tinee River to find themselves considerably west of the American line. The enemy, however, now showed no indication of becoming active offensively along the Franco-Italian border.

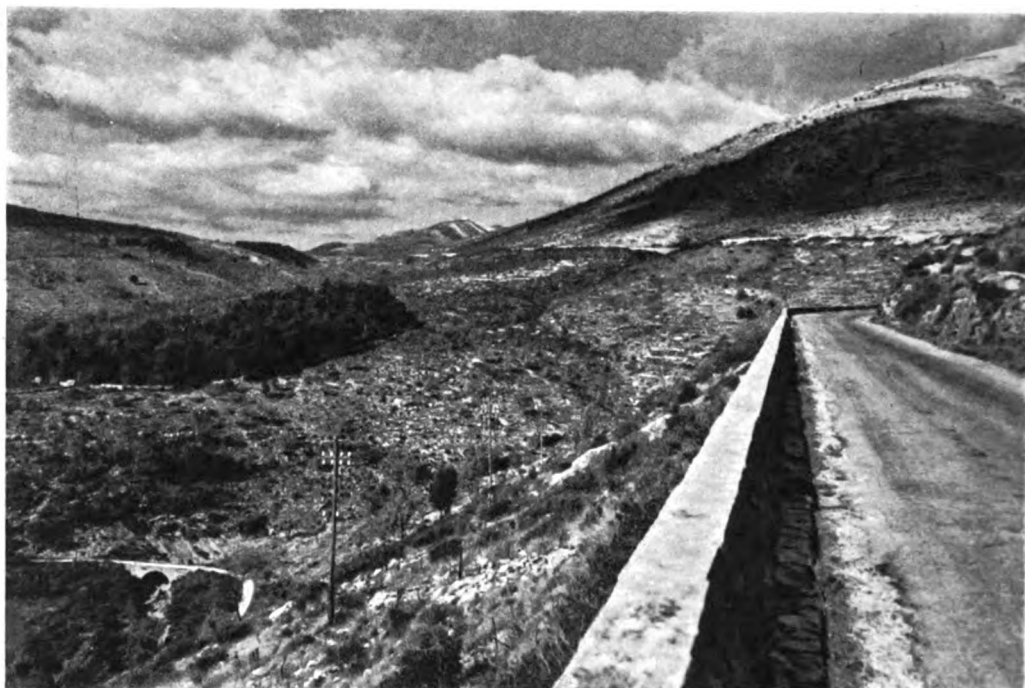
On 26 September the 1st Airborne Task Force passed from the control of Seventh Army to Sixth Army Group. The threat to the Seventh Army's eastern flank in the southern sector had virtually passed. The fear of a mobile thrust against over-extended Allied supply lines was now reduced to a minimum.

The Northern Sector

Originally the northern sector extended for 30 miles from the Larche Pass to Mont Genevre Pass. As the Seventh Army moved north-

ward this distance was greatly increased. In the final phase the flank extended from Larche Pass to the Swiss border. The enemy in the northern sector was eventually forced back into the mountain passes.

As the armored spearhead of Task Force Butler drove northward toward the approaches to Grenoble, it very rapidly elongated the



APPROACHES TO GRENOBLE

"... Task Force Butler drove northward toward the approaches to Grenoble ..."

Seventh Army's right flank. Following closely behind the Task Force the 36th Division had sent its 142nd RCT north along the Route Napoleon (Highway 85) to arrive at Gap on 22 August. There the 2nd Battalion was detached and sent east to Guillestre with instructions to secure the right flank of the 36th Division.

Guillestre controlled two important roads, one running northeast to Briancon and the other southeast to Larche Pass. The battalion set up roadblocks and maintained constant vigilance to prevent enemy raiding parties from harassing the supply lines of the 36th

Division and Task Force Butler. The Germans were reported to be holding Briancon in considerable strength, and in order successfully to contain this force the 636th Reconnaissance Troop was sent east from Grenoble toward Briancon.

On 23 August the 36th Division moved to the Rhone Valley, and the 142nd Regiment was relieved by the 180th Regiment of the 45th Division. The mission of the 180th Infantry was to maintain active patrolling and reconnaissance of the road net connecting the more important Alpine passes. To cover the area adequately the 1st Battalion was stationed at Gap, the 3rd at Chorges, and the 2nd divided between Embrun and Guillestre. Shortly after the 180th Infantry took over the sector, the FFI reported that the enemy had destroyed a roadblock at Larche Pass and was advancing westward. In order to contain this threat, the 2nd Battalion sent a patrol south from Guillestre through St. Paul. While establishing a roadblock in the vicinity of St. Paul on 25 August, the 2nd Battalion patrol drew fire from a German column which had come out of Larche Pass. The fire was returned. The Germans now changed their direction of advance southward toward Barcelonnette.

In the Col de Vars, north of St. Paul, the 180th Infantry put in a roadblock defended by a platoon, reinforced by an antitank gun. Simultaneously the 117th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to send out motorized patrols over all roads in the St. Paul-Barcelonnette area. On 26 August patrols reached the approaches of the Larche Pass. They found that the Germans had withdrawn east into the mountains, but still were firing artillery on the roads leading to Larche.

Meanwhile, a reinforced platoon was sent north from Guillestre to Briancon and discovered that the enemy had withdrawn to the vicinity of Mont Genevre Pass. The platoon, reinforced by groups of FFI, established itself in a fort to the northeast of Briancon and maintained contact with the main body of the 180th Regiment at Guillestre by means of motor patrols. One battalion was detached from the 180th Infantry and sent to reinforce the 179th Infantry in the vicinity of Grenoble, and by 27 August the remaining two battalions of the 180th Infantry were preparing to leave for the Grenoble area. The following day relief was completed when the defense of the sector was taken over

by the Provisional Flank Protection Force, later known as Task Force Bibo.

In order to release the entire VI Corps for operations in the Rhone Valley, the Seventh Army agreed to assume full responsibility for protecting the eastern flank with other troops at the army's disposal. The decision resulted in the activation of the Provisional Flank Protection Force consisting of Troop A of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, one company each from the 2nd, 3rd, and 83rd Chemical Battalions, two platoons of the 180th Infantry Antitank Company, and one battery of the 171st Field Artillery Battalion. The commanding officer of the force was Lieutenant Colonel Harold S. Bibo, a War Department observer with the Seventh Army.

The Provisional Flank Protection Force was responsible for the zone east of Grenoble, northward, from Larche Pass to Albertville. It was to maintain contact with the 1st Airborne Task Force on its right flank by means of a small detachment stationed at Digne. On 27 and 28 August Task Force Bibo established roadblocks at St. Paul and Mont Genevre. Each was manned by a chemical mortar company supported by one antitank gun. The FFI reported that the Germans were present in considerable strength along the Maurienne Valley, between Briancon and Albertville, which pointed to a possibility of an attack on Briancon from the north.

During the morning of 28 August Company C of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, which was located outside Briancon, became engaged in a fire fight with a small enemy group. The FFI, who were then occupying Briancon, dispatched 100 men to reinforce Company C. As an enemy attack in company strength developed against Fort du Dauphin, artillery in Briancon began counterbattery fire against German gun positions to the southeast of the town. Nevertheless, small enemy groups infiltrated into Fort Randoulette, Fort de Trois Tetes, and other elevated places which afforded the enemy excellent observation of Allied movement.

Intense enemy shell fire forced the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion and supporting artillery troops to evacuate Briancon and to take up new positions northwest of the town along Highway 91. Following

a stiff rearguard action, Americans set up a roadblock at the entrance of the highway tunnel at Lautaret Pass. The tunnel was prepared for demolition. Other roadblocks at St. Clement and St. Crepin, west and northwest of Guillestre were put in. The Commanding Officer of Task Force Bibb requested infantry reinforcements and antitank support. Shortly afterward, he was instructed by higher authority to effect the greatest possible delaying action; the 180th Regiment had been alerted to come to his assistance in the event of a German breakthrough.

It was known that Task Force Bibb would shortly be relieved by units of the French Army, and this partially accounted for the reluctance to shift any substantial reinforcements into the area. The FFI circulated a report that Briançon had been lost because of a shortage of ammunition. It is no doubt possible that the FFI itself did lack sufficient supplies for any sustained campaign. However, there is no indication that the Provisional Flank Protection Force was hindered in its own effort by any shortage of ammunition.

On 31 August American patrols re-entered Briançon and found that the enemy had withdrawn to forts around the town. Task Force Bibb made no effort to retake the town. It chose instead to strengthen its own defenses by putting in and maintaining additional roadblocks.

The enemy undertook limited reconnaissance and sent patrols from Larche Pass as far west as Barcelonnette. The main body of the enemy continued to remain behind the pass. But he retained control over the road running from Condamine to St. Paul and was thus able to hamper liaison between the 1st Airborne Task Force in the south and the Provisional Flank Protection Force in the north.

During late August and early September the enemy became active in isolated sectors along the northern half of the Franco-Italian frontier. Several elements of the German 157th Reserve Division, formerly stationed at Grenoble, were evidently using routes in this area as a means of escape into Italy. Troops of this division were identified in the Barcelonnette sector. Elements of the German 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division were also identified in the raid on Barcelonnette.

According to operational order No. 24 of French Army B, dated 29 August, the 2nd French Moroccan Infantry Division was to relieve American units in the Briancon-Embrun area and to cover the right flank of the Seventh Army by holding Guillestre, and the Mont Genevre, and Galibier Passes. It was also to maintain liaison with the 1st Airborne Task Force south of Larche Pass. By 2 September elements of the 2nd French Moroccan Infantry Division arrived in the neighborhood of Briancon and began relieving the Provisional Flank Protection Force.

The French Forces on the eastern flank possessed the necessary strength and equipment to take up the offensive. The primary object of its first mission was the recapture of Briancon. The French then proposed to launch two simultaneous operations, one to link up with the 1st Airborne Task Force to the south and the other to strike for the Maurienne Valley to the north. This second maneuver was to be coordinated with a movement south and east from Albertville to clear the enemy from the approaches to the Little St. Bernard Pass and thus gain control of the relatively simple road net which covered this area. Since topography confined the enemy to the roads, the problem of controlling the area was greatly simplified.

The 2nd French Moroccan Division was to be responsible for the recapture of Briancon and the encirclement operation in the Maurienne Valley. One Groupement de Tabors Marocains (Goumiers) was to move up to Larche Pass, south of Briancon. A regimental combat team of the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division was to be diverted from its northward course and assigned the task of mopping up the sector between Albertville and the Little St. Bernard Pass. The 2nd Moroccan and the 3rd Algerian Divisions in a coordinated maneuver were to drive remaining German forces back to the Italian frontier between St. Bernard and Briancon.

This strategic line of action needed a concentration of troops. The French plan included a step-down phase in order to employ the minimum security force that would be consistent with safety. As the mopping up of isolated valleys and the occupation of frontier passes was accomplished, the security mission of the Alpine region between Lake

Geneva and Larche Pass was to be assumed by Groupements of Moroccan Tabors, reinforced by the FFI. With the approach of winter and the hampering of visibility by heavy snows and mountain storms, additional battalions of FFI were to be employed.

By 2 September the French had secured the road nets southeast and northeast of Guillestre. Two days later reconnaissance elements had reached the outskirts of Briancon. Enemy batteries at La Vachette and Mt. Janus, on high ground to the northeast of the town, went into action. But by 7 September the French had overcome all opposition in the forts surrounding Briancon and were thus able to occupy the town. The Germans retreated eastward into Mont Genevre Pass, destroying bridges and damaging roads as they went.

FFI units by 9 September had occupied Seez, the key communications center just southwest of the Little St. Bernard Pass. To the south the twin drives by the 2nd Moroccan Infantry Division on the Maurienne Valley north of Briancon were making good progress. As the Maurienne Valley was being cleared of opposition, continued contact was maintained with the enemy both at the Little St. Bernard and Mont Genevre Passes.

Since the bulk of the Germans had been driven into the high passes, elements of the 2nd French Moroccan Division, south of Briancon, were relieved by the Goums. French units were thus released for offensive operations in the passes themselves. The enemy displayed few active tendencies and concerned himself with "passive withdrawal." Apparently, the evacuation process had been practically complete before the French took over the sector. Other than the taking of Briancon and the campaign on the approaches to the Little St. Bernard Pass there was little offensive activity. By the middle of September the French had completed their preparations for an offensive into the passes. But on 15 September the control of French Army B passed from the Seventh Army to Sixth Army Group, and their activities were no longer of direct concern to the Commanding General of the Seventh Army.

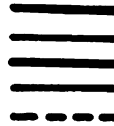
In general, military operations on the Seventh Army's eastern flank must be viewed in the light of defensive strategy. A situation

approximating equilibrium had been achieved by the end of September. Allied air superiority, coupled with the fact that the high mountains of the Alps between France and Italy provided a natural barrier, greatly minimized the danger of any large-scale counterattacks from north-western Italy.

Except for the isolated aggressive gestures of the German LXXV Corps at Briancon and Barcelonnette, the enemy was content to withdraw into the mountain passes and await developments. On the other hand, the threat of an Allied advance into northern Italy no doubt caused certain anxiety to the enemy. The assumption that the 5th and 8th Armies would break through in Italy prompted the 1st Airborne Task Force to advance beyond the Var River and make a serious attempt to take Sospel, thereby gaining control of the important coastal highway leading from Italy. However, no Allied offensive in Italy materialized. After the French had cleaned up the area north of Larche Pass, the whole French-Italian frontier again became static.

MARCO

LEGEND:



CHAPTER XI

Consolidation of Seventh Army Gains

AT the end of August the Seventh Army had completed the liberation of southern France and was closing in on the city of Lyon. On the eastern flank, patrols of the First Airborne Task Force reached the Italian border. On the west bank of the Rhone below Lyon units of French Army B were pushing the enemy to the north, and French reconnaissance elements were advancing along the Mediterranean coast close to the Spanish border. On the north, VI Corps troops had already crossed the Rhone River where it flows into Lyon from the high Alps to the east and were operating northeast of the city. The American Third Army was advancing east, northeast, and southeast from Paris. All German troops south of the Loire and west of the Rhone-Saone Rivers were faced with complete isolation as the two Allied armies approached each other.

By 25 August plans for the junction of the forces of *OVERLORD* and *DRAGOON* were already under way. As General George C. Marshall wrote General Eisenhower:

It begins to look as if your forces and Wilson's may approach each other very fast and that timely action may be required by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to insure coordination which maintains the impetus of our attack without respite.

Air operations may require special treatment since the Tactical Air Forces may be overlapping in a few days

Will you give us your thoughts on the foregoing and where and under what circumstances you will submit the recommendations, as provided for in your Directive, concerning your assumption of command of the Southern Forces.

Thus the "Mediterranean" phase of Seventh Army operations was drawing to a close, and the "European" phase was opening.

On 29 August General Wilson; General Devers; Air Marshall Sir John Slessor, Deputy Commander, Mediterranean Allied Air Force; Major General L. W. Rooks, Deputy Chief of Staff, Allied Force Headquarters; and Major General John Connor, Commanding General, XII Air Force arrived at Seventh Army Headquarters. General Wilson desired to ascertain General Patch's future plans in order to coordinate them with General Eisenhower's movements and to make the necessary arrangement for the transfer, at the proper time, of his operational responsibilities to General Eisenhower.

General Patch disclosed that his tactical plan was to send VI Corps north from both Valence and Grenoble to Lyon. Thereafter, the advance would continue on the axis Lyon-Beaune-Dijon. After the capture of Lyon VI Corps was to be regrouped to operate on the line Autun-Dijon-Langres. The object was to make contact with General Patton's American Third Army. Elements of French Army B, the 1st Infantry Division, and 1st Armored Division, would maintain a strong reconnaissance force between Narbonne and Lyon on the west bank of the Rhone and would assist in the capture of Lyon. French Army B units east of the Rhone, the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division, the 2nd Moroccan Infantry Division, and the 9th Colonial Infantry Division, would advance north on the axis Sisteron-Grenoble-Bourg-Besancon and immediately relieve American VI Corps troops guarding the Alpine Passes. The First Airborne Task Force would assist French Army B in the protection of the VI Corps right flank facing the Franco-Italian frontier.

This was the plan. After the fall of Lyon the Seventh Army would be in a position to advance farther north. It would continue to push the German Nineteenth Army out of France and link itself with the eastward advance of the Third Army. French Army B and the 1st Airborne Task Force on the eastern flank would be brought together for the assumption of command by General Devers' Sixth Army Group.

General Wilson approved this tactical outline. It conformed with General Eisenhower's wishes for an American advance on the Army left flank to make contact with General Patton's Third Army, while the French advanced on the right flank to close the Italian and

Swiss borders. General Wilson proposed that operational control of VI Corps should pass from his command to that of General Eisenhower when the Corps was ready to operate north of Lyon. At that time General Dever's Advance Allied Force Headquarters would become Sixth Army Group. Although the forces then employed under Seventh Army did not seem to be large enough to warrant the activation of an army group, General Wilson thought it should take command of southern France in view of the length of communications, responsibility for port maintenance, civil affairs, and matters connected with the French Resistance Movement. Also there was the possibility that elements on the right flank of General Eisenhower's forces might either be merged with Seventh Army under Sixth Army Group or maintained through its line of communications.

The Occupation of Lyon

For the Germans, too, the "Mediterranean" phase of the war was rapidly approaching a conclusion. Captured documents and statements of prisoners of war revealed that Lyon was to be the initial assembly point for the trek northeastward for those German units fortunate enough to run the gauntlet at Montelimar. The troops were to be assembled and were to use the Lyon-Dijon highway for the continuance of the withdrawal. Screening action was initiated to the south, and bitter delaying actions were being fought at the important communications centers.

Most of the German Nineteenth Army passed through the Montelimar trap on 28 August. Battered remnants continued to withdraw up the Rhone Valley through Valence to Lyon and Dijon and turned eastward in the direction of Belfort and the Vosges. On 28 August no large movement north of Lyon was as yet evident, for the bulk of the German army was still south of the city. Despite heavy shelling, bombing, and strafing, the withdrawal along the east bank of the Rhone continued during daylight hours. The Germans fought only when forced to protect their evacuation routes from forward Allied units racing north and east to cut them off.

On 1 September German forces pouring through the Lyon-Dijon funnel represented all that remained of the occupation forces of southern France. These included not only the units in contact with the Seventh Army, but also those German troops who had been in the Loire River-Bordeaux-Toulouse-Vichy area. Trying to reach some sort of safety in the east before being cut off by the approaching junction of the American Seventh and Third Armies were two German First Army divisions, the 16th and the 159th, and the Nineteenth Army's 716th Division evacuating on the west side of the Rhone, with which contact had not yet been established. Evacuees also included a mass of combat, supply, administrative, air force, naval, and governmental personnel. Enemy combat troops protecting this withdrawal comprised elements of the divisions that had been engaged on the Seventh Army front during the preceding two weeks.

The German 148th Reserve Division and 157th Reserve Division were retreating toward the Italian border. South of Lyon an estimated 8,730 combat effectives still actively opposed the Seventh Army. These included remnants of several divisions, such as the 11th Panzer, the 189th Reserve Division, and the 198th and 338th Infantry Divisions. But three other German divisions, the 16th, the 159th, and the 716th, were soon to appear in the order of battle. Captured German letters reflected a disintegrating morale, even a feeling of panic, among the fleeing troops. Their remaining hope was to withdraw as rapidly as possible, to join the southeastern wing of the German forces in northern France, and with them to form a defense line.

The end of August found the major elements of the Seventh Army forming a semi-circle along the line St. Etienne-Bourg-de-Peage-Voirion-Meximieux, around the rear of the retreating German columns. On the western end of the arc the newly organized French II Corps, under the command of Major General De Montsabert, was rapidly advancing west of the Rhone without enemy contact. Within this Corps the French 1st Armored Division was spearheading the attack on Lyon from the southwest. The towns of Serrieres and Firminy had already been occupied by 1 September, and the 2nd Regiment of Algerian

Spahis had passed through St. Etienne and St. Chamond and was within 20 miles of Lyon.

Farther south the French 1st Infantry Division was operating in the Nimes-Uzes area. East of the Rhone the 9th Colonial Infantry Division was still in the Marseille-Toulon area. The 3rd Algerian Infantry Division at Grenoble and the 2nd Moroccan Infantry Division at Gap, with attached armored units, were relieving the American VI Corps in the French Alps.

The divisions of the American VI Corps, pressing the Germans against the Rhone and Saone Rivers from Bourg-de-Peage and Voiron to Meximieux and Amberieu-en-Bugey, formed the center and north-eastern end of the semi-circle. The 3rd Division, after mopping up in the Montelimar battle square, shifted its regiments to a new assembly area near Voiron, north of Grenoble. The 36th Division continued to pursue the retreating Germans up the Rhone Valley. The 141st Infantry cleared resistance at Valence and advanced northeast to Bourg-de-Peage, while the 142nd Infantry was advancing north from Livron up Highway 7. In the division center, elements of the 117th Reconnaissance Troops entered Vienne during the afternoon of 1 September and made contact with a German column on the Lyon road. Meanwhile the 45th Division had moved up Highway 75 from Grenoble toward Bourg-en-Bresse. Its forward elements were already in the vicinity of Meximieux and Amberieu.

Lyon was a military prize worthy of defense. It is France's third largest city, having a population of half a million. The city is a highly important industrial center and an important focal point for internal waterways, railroads, and highways serving all sections of France. Allied intelligence first believed that the Germans would defend the city at least temporarily. Because Lyon was an important point in the line of retreat, its defense would cover and secure the withdrawal. But German documents captured on 1 September revealed that there would be no defense of the city and, contrary to Allied calculation, that it would be completely evacuated as rapidly as the retreating column could move to the north. In view of the rapid advance of Allied forces

in northern France, the Germans had apparently decided to abandon the defense of the Lyon-Dijon-Besancon triangle.

A VI Corps field order of 31 August had directed that the 36th Division advance northward on Lyon with "utmost speed." At the same time the 45th Division was to concentrate in the Meximieux area, covering the Corps' right flank and remaining in position to attack northward to seize Bourg-en-Bresse. The 3rd Division, at Voiron, was to maintain liaison with the other divisions and be prepared to assist either of them. The maneuver was designed to place the VI Corps in position to encircle and capture Lyon.

In and about Lyon the strength of the French Forces of the Interior increased as the Allies approached. There were an estimated 4,000 FFI troops in the area. The resistance group planned to seize street cars, which were in car barns on the west side of the Saone River, and use them to block the narrow streets to prevent any withdrawal of the Germans along the west side of the Saone. The FFI wished to liberate Lyon completely with their own forces. However, General De Gaulle's military representative warned against "premature action." On 30 August the FFI at Lyon was given orders to be ready to establish contact with Allied columns, which were rapidly approaching the outskirts. The enemy was to be harassed but not actively engaged. An all-out attack was to take place only in cooperation with troops of the American and French armies.

The advancing troops of VI Corps, east of the Rhone, found little to oppose their entry into the city. The Germans, harassed by the FFI, attempted only to defend a system of roadblocks east of Lyon until their troops could be pulled out. On the afternoon of 1 September the 142nd Infantry reached the hills overlooking Lyon. The enemy offered no opposition until American troops reached the flat ground before the city, and even there resistance was slight. Throughout the next day the 36th Division continued to occupy key positions east and southeast of the city, thus placing elements in position for the attack which had been planned in detail.

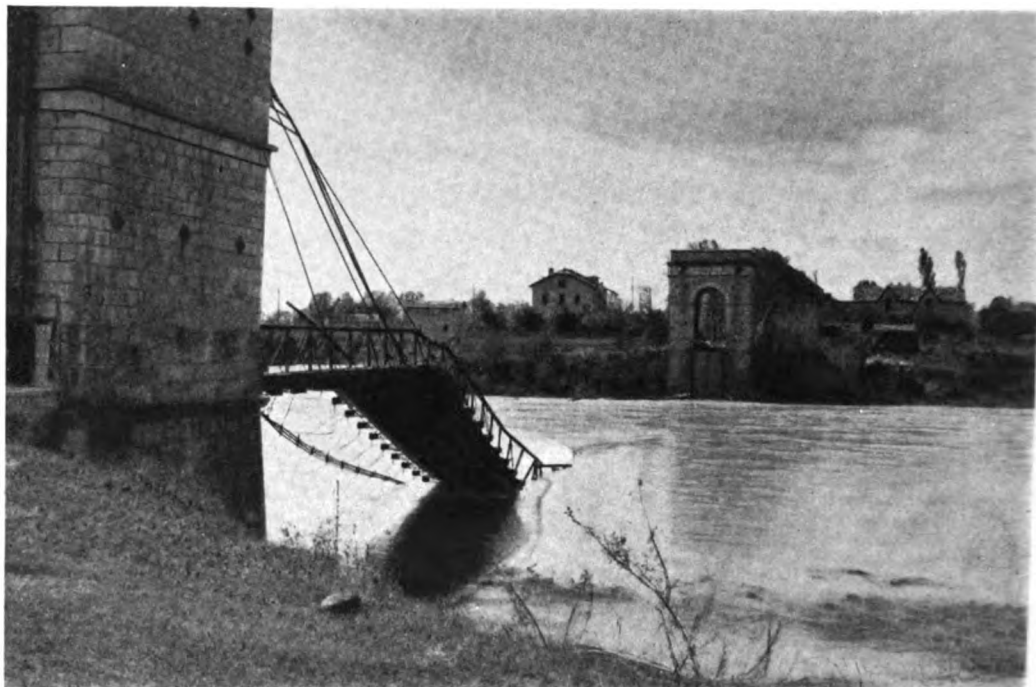
At 1130 hours on 2 September, General Dahlquist ordered an officer patrol to investigate French reports that Lyon had been

evacuated. Early in the afternoon the patrol reported that Lyon was clear, up to the Rhone River where the Germans were covering the approaches to the city by fire. At 1700 hours, General Butler instructed the 36th Division that it was not to enter the city of Lyon, but that officer patrols and liaison parties should be sent into the city to maintain contact with the FFI and French Army B approaching Lyon from the west. Pockets of Germans still held out between the Rhone and Saone, although the city had been virtually liberated. American troops were kept at the edge of Lyon in order that the French could claim the prestige of liberation. Then a small force, consisting of one platoon of infantry and one platoon of tanks, was placed at the mayor's disposal to "help keep order." In cooperation with the FFI this patrol neutralized the German pocket in the town's northeastern section between the two rivers.

Meanwhile, on the west bank of the Rhone, the French II Corps was moving up along two routes against practically no opposition. On 2 September reconnaissance elements reached the outskirts of the city without contacting the enemy. As the main body moved up, advance elements extended as far north as Villefranche, more than 15 miles above Lyon, and occupied high ground in that area. On 3 September the 1st French Infantry Division entered Lyon and deployed along the entire perimeter of the city west of the rivers. At the end of the day the division began to regroup to assure law and order; but this precaution was unnecessary, for all was calm.

While the French II Corps and the American 36th Division were engaged in and about Lyon, the American 45th Division was in contact with the German rear guard in the Meximieux area. The French were moving up the west bank of the Saone along Highway 6 toward Macon, Chalon-sur-Saone, and Dijon. The road junctions at Meximieux and Bourg-en-Bresse became of primary importance to the Germans for use in their withdrawal north through Besancon to the Belfort Gap. At Meximieux, on the road and rail net running northeast out of Lyon, the 11th Panzer Division was aggressively defending the flank of the retreating forces. By blowing bridges and establishing roadblocks the Germans hoped to keep the main body of the Allied forces south of the

Rhone and Ain Rivers. However, by 30 August advance elements of the 45th Division had already crossed both rivers and set up roadblocks at Meximieux, Lagnieu, and Amberieu.



BRIDGE BLOWN BY THE GERMANS

" . . . By blowing bridges and establishing roadblocks the Germans hoped to keep the main body of the Allied forces south of the Rhone and Ain Rivers . . . "

Meximieux

On 1 September the 179th Infantry was left to block the road junction at Meximieux, while the rest of the 45th Division advanced up the east bank of the Ain paralleling the retreating German units on the west bank. There was little opposition to the northern advance of the 180th Infantry, but the holding force at Meximieux faced a different situation. There the German 11th Panzer Division was fighting vigorously to drive the 179th Regiment from the town. Using tanks, self-propelled artillery, and infantry the Germans broke through a roadblock five miles southwest of Meximieux on the highway from Lyon.

Intelligence reported they would attempt to retake Meximieux and push east into the 45th Division rear in order to cover the German flank. The 179th Infantry accordingly prepared to defend the town.

Shortly after 1000 hours on 1 September the Germans attacked with about 1,000 men, backed up by tanks and self-propelled guns. These were first-line units of the 15th Panzer Regiment and the 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of the 11th Panzer Division. The enemy fanned out and directed his attacks against American positions along the entire front. In the center of the defense line at Meximieux were the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, and FFI units, together with supporting tank destroyers and artillery. As the Germans approached, the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry, on positions near Chalamont north of Meximieux, was ordered back to assist the 1st Battalion in its defense of the city. Throughout the day the 3rd Battalion of the 179th Regiment successfully defended both banks of the Ain River, saving an important bridge east of Meximieux, in spite of constant enemy pressure.

The Germans' first attack on Meximieux from the northwest was repulsed. Attacks from the south followed. As these attacks mounted in fury, even kitchen and headquarters personnel were sent into the line. An enemy attempt to seize the railroad station was broken up by concentrated American fire coming from the station itself. At one point German tanks broke from the cover of the woods and raced across the railroad tracks into town. Several sped down the main street but were disabled by fire from tank destroyers. American infantry then killed or captured enemy tankmen before they could disperse.

During the afternoon of 1 September eight more tanks advanced down the main highway from the direction of Lyon. Backed up by artillery, FFI troops were dispatched to the southern sector to deal with this new threat. With the coming of darkness the Germans began to withdraw, leaving behind them destroyed vehicles and many dead. The enemy had suffered 350 killed or wounded, lost 41 prisoners, and had five tanks and three self-propelled guns destroyed. American casualties were surprisingly low, even though the enemy had cut all roads and encircled the town. The 1st Battalion of the 179th Infantry, which had

been in the thick of the action, reported only 11 casualties during the day's fighting. Though artillery and mortar fire continued throughout the night, by 0935 hours on 2 September Meximieux was declared secure.

The Race for the Belfort Gap

The rapid reduction of Lyon and the favorable conditions for continuing the pursuit of the fleeing Germans altered the original plans for a regrouping of Seventh Army according to the design of the Theater Commander. In the strictest sense the assigned mission of Seventh Army had been to land in southern France, capture Toulon and Marseille, and then exploit northward toward Lyon and Vichy. This primary mission had now been accomplished. Although Vichy had not been formally entered by Allied troops, its importance as a military objective no longer existed. Because of the favorable situation for continuing the pursuit of the German Nineteenth Army, the new mission of the Seventh Army was apparent.

Two likely escape routes from France lay open to the retreating Germans. They could advance up the Saone River Valley to Chalon-sur-Saone, then north to Dijon, and beyond to Chaumont or Epinal, and then to Nancy. This route would avoid the high Vosges Mountains to the east and would put at their disposition an excellent rail and road net. It would also be protected to some extent from the advancing American Seventh Army by both the Doubs and Saone Rivers. However, this entire route was being threatened by the eastward advance of the American Third Army toward Nancy.

A second route followed the Doubs River Valley northeast of Chalon-sur-Saone, between the Alps and the Vosges, extending northeast from Dole through Besancon and Baume-les-Dames toward Montbéliard. From there the main lines of communication pass through the Belfort Gap to Mulhouse and the Rhine. This route was more direct than that by way of Nancy, and by withdrawing along the northwest bank of the Doubs the Germans could utilize the river as an obstacle to protect their retreat from advancing units of VI Corps. Once the Germans were past Besancon, the Alps and neutral Switzerland would cover their southern

flank and the Vosges their northern. With their flanks secure, the Germans would have the choice of defending the line of the Vosges or escaping across the Rhine. It was probable that the enemy would make some use of both escape routes. Again it was the 11th Panzer Division which was designated to hold back the pursuing VI Corps troops and keep them south of the Doubs and Saone Rivers.

At approximately 0200 hours, 3 September, a special officer-courier arrived at the Seventh Army Command Post at Brignoles with an urgent message from General Truscott. The VI Corps Commander sent an estimate of the situation: The Germans were in full retreat, very much disorganized; and delaying actions at advantageous defensive positions were all that could be expected. The VI Corps, he continued, was in contact with elements of the 11th Panzer Division in the Bourg area and on the previous day had destroyed 15 enemy tanks. In view of this situation, General Truscott requested permission to continue the "relentless pursuit" of the enemy on the axis Lons-Le Saunier-Besancon-Belfort with the object of preventing his escape into Germany.

After a staff conference VI Corps was directed to continue the "hot pursuit" of the enemy northeastward to the Belfort Gap via Lons-Le Saunier and Besancon. French Army B was to complete the occupation of Lyon and thereafter to push up the northwest bank of the Saone on the line Dijon-Epinal with sufficient forces detached to protect the right flank of the Seventh Army. Later, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson also concurred, in view of the fleeing nature of the opportunity, and agreed that a regrouping of the Seventh Army in accordance with SHAEF's plans could be temporarily delayed. General Truscott lost no time in putting this directive into execution.

By 3 September the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had reached Bourg-en-Bresse and Montrevel on Highway 75. During the night units of the 11th Panzer Division, withdrawing northward after the fight at Meximieux, entered Bourg-en-Bresse and a "free-for-all" followed. Almost all of the men of Troop B, 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, were killed or captured and their equipment lost, including 20 one-quarter ton trucks, 15 armored cars, and two light tanks. Although opposed by enemy armor and a number of heavy self-propelled

guns, Troop B had fought gallantly and succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the Germans. The following day, the 45th Division, having destroyed enemy holding forces at Pont d'Ain, on Highway 75, and at other points southeast of the city, occupied Bourg-en-Bresse.

After the occupation of Bourg-en-Bresse, VI Corps troops temporarily lost contact with the enemy. The 45th Division spearheaded the advance through Lons-Le Saunier, Poligny, and Mouchard toward the Doubs. North of Lons-Le Saunier columns encountered numerous road obstacles. Blown bridges forced detours over muddy trails. Supply lines were extended, and transportation facilities were inadequate. Lyon was more than 70 miles to the rear; and supply depots were still on the beaches, over 250 miles away. The entire VI Corps was advancing along one main route, and traffic became so heavy that halts were necessary to gain sufficient clearance between march units.

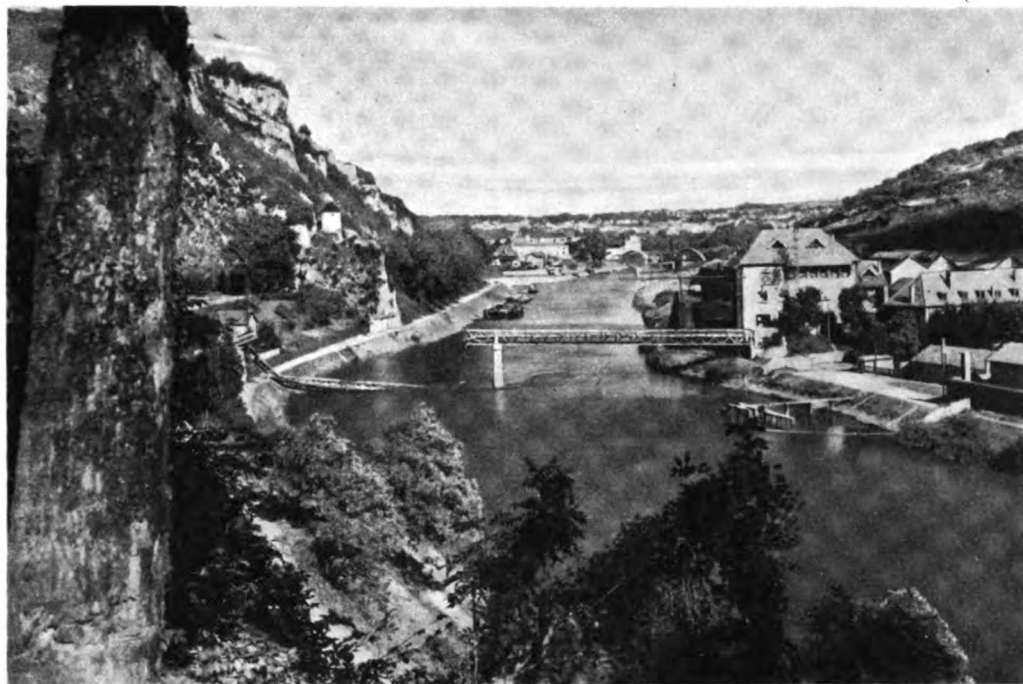
As the Germans approached the Doubs in their retreat, they turned and made a determined effort to halt the advancing VI Corps. They apparently hoped to hold Besancon until 15 September, so that the remaining German troops in the Dijon area would be able to escape through the Belfort Gap.

Crossing the Doubs

Besancon is a fortress built by nature and improved by generations of military engineers. An industrial city of about 80,000 people, it is also a key communication and supply center. The Doubs River makes a loop around the city's industrial heart. The main approaches are solidly guarded by a huge Vauban-designed fort, La Citadelle, which in turn is supported by four minor forts: Fort Tousey on the southwest, Fort des Trois Chatels to the southeast, and on higher elevations across the river Forts Bregille and Chaudanne. These fortifications, built in the 17th century, are extremely thick-walled, surrounded by moats and utilize high ground to command all avenues of approach.

On the north bank of the river, west of the city, are Forts Rosemont and De Planoise; directly south on a steep hill stands Fort le

Fontain; due east is Fort de Montfaucon. This system of redoubts was manned by an estimated 3,000 German troops made up of stragglers and elements from training units and battle groups, which the Germans were trying to reorganize as combat units. Since enemy movement through



BESANCON

" . . . Besancon is a fortress built by nature and improved by generations of military engineers . . . "

Besancon was almost continuous, the strength and composition of forces defending the city could not be accurately determined by the VI Corps as it closed in from the south.

The bulk of VI Corps on 5 September was concentrated in the area east and southeast of the city. The 3rd Division had moved up from the rear to the center of the VI Corps line and was in position to assault from the south. The 36th Division occupied the area from Mouchard and Poligny to the northwest, and had orders to protect the Corps left flank. The 45th Division was moving rapidly northeast to

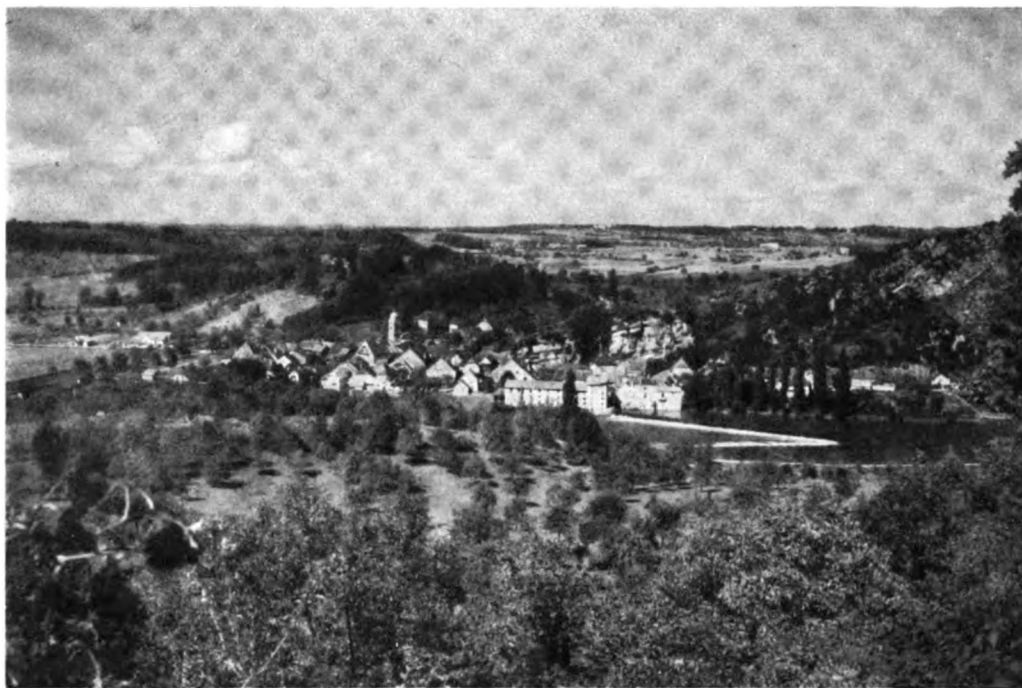
the Doubs River at Baume-les-Dames on the corps right flank. This maneuver threatened the enemy's escape route to the Belfort Gap.

The 3rd Division closed in on Besancon and occupied high ground on three sides. On the left flank below the city the 7th Infantry Regiment seized the Doubs bridge at Avanne and held positions along the river. A battalion of the 30th Infantry crossed the swamp lands northeast of Besancon and occupied the village and fort at Montfaucon. From this elevation tanks, tank destroyers, and artillery fired at enemy vehicles withdrawing along the Belfort Road. "I never saw such confusion in my life", reported a tank destroyer commander. "Germans were flying every way, ammunition going off and flares lit the place like the Fourth of July back home." The enemy continued to withdraw from the city, but left behind delaying forces of infantry armed with machine guns and mortars.

During the night of 6-7 September a battalion of the 15th Infantry took Fort Fontain and then cleared the southern approaches to the outer defense of Besancon. With supporting fire from machine guns, tanks, mortars, tank destroyers, and artillery, infantrymen from the 30th Regiment took Fort Tousey at 1315 hours, 7 September, and Fort Trois Chatels shortly afterwards. Fifty-four Germans, including one officer, were captured; and the remainder escaped to the citadel or were killed in flight. With the supporting forts out of action, the citadel was bombarded by artillery and mortars. After the barrage lifted, infantry crossed the moat and began scaling the walls, at which time the defenders indicated their willingness to surrender. Over 200 prisoners were taken. Elements of the 30th Infantry crossed the Doubs on a temporary foot bridge and found that part of Besancon north of the citadel clear.

While the assault on the citadel was in progress, the 7th Infantry, having crossed the Doubs River at Avanne, occupied the western outskirts of Besancon. Fort Rosemont and Fort Chaudanne fell by frontal assault to the 2nd Battalion. The regiment moved around the city to the northeast to cut all important roads and to clean out small pockets of enemy resistance. When the 7th joined with the 30th Infantry, advancing from the center of the city, the fall of Besancon was completed.

While the 3rd Division was engaged at Besancon, the 36th Division, on the corps left flank, was probing for crossings over the Doubs near the town of Dole 30 miles to the southwest. The division engineers attempted to construct a bridge, but heavy enemy fire from the opposite



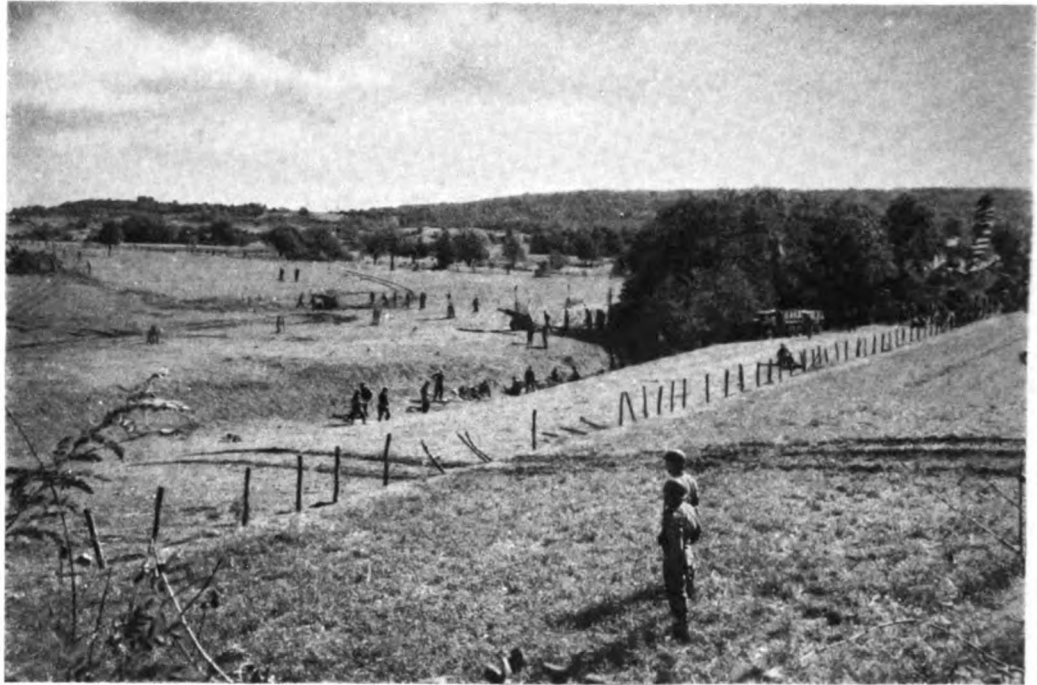
AVANNE

"... The 7th Infantry crossed the Doubs River at Avanne ..."

bank stopped all progress. In order to clear the enemy from the bridge site, the 143rd Infantry swung east in motor convoy, crossed over the Doubs at the Avanne bridge, which had been held by units of the 3rd Division, and began to clear the northern bank. Northwest of Besancon small enemy pockets were cleared out, but the most important aspect of the fighting was the capture of an enemy fuel dump containing 177,500 gallons of gasoline and 4,000 gallons of alcohol. In view of the shortage of motor fuel, this find proved to be of great significance.

The 141st Infantry also crossed at Avanne on 8 September and cut the highways leading west and northwest from Besancon. Tanks

from the 753rd Tank Battalion crossed to cover the flank and aid the infantry in extending the Doubs bridgehead. By the time the 142nd Infantry had secured both sides of a bridge site near Byans, 12 miles down the river from Besancon, work was begun on a class 40 trestle



SETTING UP 105MM HOWITZERS

"... supported by . . . heavy artillery the infantry closed in for the assault . . ."

bridge, which after its rapid completion permitted armor and supplies to roll across into the newly-won bridgehead.

Northeast of Besancon at Baume-les-Dames the 45th Division also had crossed the Doubs. On 7 September troops of the 179th and 180th Infantry Regiments crossed the river by foot-bridge, barges, and ferry. The 2nd Battalion of the 180th Infantry entered Baume-les-Dames, but heavy enemy fire from tanks and machine guns stopped the advance and drove the battalion out. The 2nd Battalion continued to engage the enemy while the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 180th crossed both above and below the town. The completion of this movement

seriously threatened German troops in Baume-les-Dames with encirclement. Therefore they began to withdraw on 8 September to prevent capture or annihilation. Supported by tanks, tank destroyers, and heavy artillery, the infantry closed in for the assault, and Baume-les-Dames fell during the early hours of 9 September. Farther upstream, at Clerval, the crossing of the 179th Infantry had been uneventful, because a heavy artillery barrage had driven the enemy from the opposite bank.

The entire 45th Division then attacked north toward the road junction at Villersexel. After nearly a month of long road marches and speedy advances the war of rapid movement came to an end. Movement now became slower, plodding every mile through hills and wooded terrain in the face of an alert enemy. The autumn rains had started. The streams were swollen, and the ground was becoming too soft for cross-country operations with armored vehicles and tanks. The Germans had now regrouped and, taking advantage of good defensive terrain, were fighting tenaciously.

Enemy units opposing the VI Corps assault, at Besancon and at the crossing of the Doubs, were advance elements of the 159th Reserve Division, evacuated from the Bordeaux area and with which contact had not previously been made. Other German troops included remnants of the same divisions which had faced the Seventh Army since D-Day. Though thousands of prisoners had been captured and vast stretches of territory had been liberated, the German High Command had been able to withdraw a considerable portion of its forces. As General Truscott explained, the mere liberation of territory did not mean the destruction of the German armed forces, for those who escaped one day would live to fight another. On 8 September the General issued the following order to the VI Corps:

The purpose of this operation is to destroy by killing or capturing the maximum number of enemy formations.

Therefore the following should be observed:

- a. Make every effort to entrap enemy formations regardless of size. Long range fires, especially artillery, will merely warn and cause a change in direction.
- b. All units, but especially battalions and lower units, must be kept well in hand. Commanders of all ranks must avoid wide dispersion and consequent lack of control.

- c. Tanks must accompany leading infantry elements and tank destroyers must accompany leading tanks. All must be supported by artillery emplaced well forward.
- d. Reconnaissance must be continuous and thorough — foot elements to a distance of five miles, motor elements to contact the enemy.
- e. Contact once gained must be maintained. The enemy must not be allowed to escape.
- f. Every attack must be pressed with the utmost vigor. Be vicious. Seek to kill and destroy.

CHAPTER XII

The Junction of Dragoon and Overlord

THE Seventh Army plan for sealing off the German troops in south and central France was being set and tightened by all its main assault forces. General Truscott's VI Corps was advancing from Lyon to the Doubs. General Monsabert's French II Corps pushed along the west bank of the Rhone and Saone, covering the Army's left flank and striking for a junction with the American Third Army. The French I Corps, under General Bethouart, moved northward in the eastern sector protecting the right flank. All possible effort was to be made to keep the enemy from slipping into Germany.

The Swiss and Northern Italian frontiers were held by the 2nd Moroccan Infantry Division, and contact was maintained with the 1st Airborne Task Force in the coastal area of the frontier. The mountainous territory between the Swiss border and the advancing American units of VI Corps was cleared by the 3rd Algerian Infantry Division, which had moved up from Marseille, in conjunction with the 9th Colonial Infantry Division which had moved from Toulon through Grenoble.

Seventh Army moved quickly to exploit its opportunities. The junction of DRAGOON and OVERLORD would constitute a significant victory for the Allied invasion of Fortress Europe. Successfully trapping the retreating enemy forces would practically insure the complete liberation of France.



GENERAL BETHOUART
*"... moved northward ...
protecting the right flank ..."*

On the Seventh Army's left flank the French II Corps had taken Chalon-sur-Saone, more than 70 miles north of Lyon, by 6 September. In the Army's center, American VI Corps units were preparing to cross the Doubs River at Dole, Besancon, and Baume-les-Dames. On 6 September troops of the French I Corps on the Army right flank occupied Pierrefontaine, Maiche, and St. Hippolyte, directly east of Besancon and along the Swiss border. On the following day these French troops reached to the north a point only ten miles from Mount Beliard on the Doubs and less than 20 miles from Belfort.

On 8 September the German Nineteenth Army struck back. Early in the morning an enemy column, including tanks, moved south from Montbeliard toward elements of the French I Corps along the Doubs River. Two other columns of the 11th Panzer Division attacked at Glay and Blamont, northeast of St. Hippolyte. The French were driven from their forward positions, and Glay was recaptured by the Germans.

This blow brought a halt to the race for Belfort and made possible the establishment of German defensive positions before the Gap. The retreat phase of enemy operations had come to an end, and the Germans were succeeding in their efforts to establish a front by executing a vast turning movement, which would bring their forces into line with other retreating elements to the north. The security of the Belfort Gap was the key to any future defensive line in the Vosges. The 11th Panzer Division, the most effective unit of the Nineteenth Army, was assigned the mission of stopping any Allied attempt to break through to the Rhine.

The attack near Montbeliard arrested the advance of the French and thus secured the German left flank. The Nineteenth Army was now occupying an east-west line, generally following the Doubs river, but its amorphous right flank was still exposed. The 159th Reserve Division was added to the enemy's order of battle on 6 September, when elements of the division were committed to the defense of Besancon. The 716th Infantry Division was committed at Chalon-sur-Saone in an effort to hold open an escape route for the estimated 100,000 enemy troops moving toward the Rhine from southwestern France. This retreating

mass included a miscellany of battle groups varying from company to brigade strength and constantly changing in composition as the enemy attempted to reorganize his lines. Whenever possible these battle groups were assimilated into the Nineteenth Army itself.

The Nineteenth Army executed its turning movement and absorbed the stragglers from the west simultaneously. It pivoted on the anchor position established before the Belfort Gap by the 11th Panzer Division and withdrew the center and right of its line from an east-west to a north-south axis, fighting delaying actions only at threatened points.

French II Corps Advances in the West

While the American VI and French I Corps were threatening the Besancon-Belfort escape route of the Germans, the French II Corps was pursuing the retreating enemy along the other escape route from Lyon to Dijon to Nancy. This Allied advance up the west bank of the Saone protected the Seventh Army's left flank and placed the French II Corps in a position to effect liaison with the American Third Army pushing southeast from Paris. On 3 September General Patch informed Colonel Agostini, Deputy Chief of Staff of French Army B, that a task force composed of French troops would shortly advance toward the northwest and effect a junction with the OVERLORD forces. The French II Corps, consisting of the 1st French Infantry Division and the 1st French Armored Division, was admirably adapted for this operation.

On 3 September air reconnaissance reported very heavy enemy movement on the Lyon-Macon-Chalon-Dijon route. Fighter-bombers attacked some 500 horse-drawn vehicles spotted north of Chalon, destroyed over 300, damaged others, and killed many enemy personnel. The same day French II Corps took Villefranche, north of Lyon, capturing 2,400 prisoners.

A captured document revealed that three battle groups of the German 716th Infantry Division were responsible for holding open the escape route through Chalon and Chagny until the German First Army could complete its withdrawal. The 716th Infantry Division, together with elements of the First Army's 16th Infantry and 159th Reserve

Divisions, had the mission of delaying the Allied advance west of the Saone in order to allow the greatest possible number of German forces to escape from France. Reports indicated that some 100,000 men, most of them communication and service troops, were attempting to pass through the dwindling corridor between the forces of DRAGOON and OVERLORD.

On 5 September French II Corps troops overcame resistance and occupied Chalon-sur-Saone. French artillery continued to fire on enemy elements withdrawing north toward Beaune and Dijon. General



GENERAL
GOISLARD DE MONSABERT
"*...continued his advance north...*"

Monsabert, Commanding French II Corps, received a memorandum from the Chief of Staff, Seventh Army, notifying him that the American VI Corps was still in contact with the 11th Panzer Division but that it appeared that the majority of the reinforced German Nineteenth Army, including the new 30th SS Infantry Division, was on General Monsabert's immediate front, although in greatly reduced strength. "I trust", wrote General White, "you will have no difficulty in driving this force northward to its final extermination."

The recently formed 30th SS Infantry Division contained many Russian, Ukranian, and Polish "volunteers." Only about ten percent of its personnel was German. Internal tensions and low morale became evident when, on 14 September, one battalion of Ukrainians killed all its German officers and went over to the French Maquis.

The French II Corps continued its advance north. The 1st French Armored Division led the way toward Beaune, followed by the infantry and assisted by the FFI. West of Chalon two German trains with one gun, two tanks, and 600 prisoners were captured. On 8 September an armored advance guard entered Beaune and mopped up enemy resistance. While this operation was in progress, the enemy brought up an infantry battalion by armored train and attacked the left

flank of the French rear near Chagny. The attack was unsuccessful and cost the Germans 400 killed and 30 prisoners. Fanning out, the 1st French Infantry Division outflanked Autun, some 20 miles west of Chagny, from the north and had cleared the town by the end of the day.

Troops of the French II Corps raced to meet the American XV Corps of the Third Army. Only 25 miles separated the French from Dijon, and the fall of this important city would not only cut the chief enemy escape route but also outflank the Doubs line. On 9 September French armored elements reached a point on Highway 74 almost midway between Beaune and Dijon. Here the Germans attempted to hold firm and halt the advance. Another counterattack was launched into the flank of II Corps. However, this attempt failed and cost the Germans over 300 killed and many captured. An estimated 300 vehicles and 12 guns of different calibers were destroyed.

Seventh and Third Armies Join Forces

Dijon was invested and liberated by the 1st French Armored Division on 10 September. The Germans did not attempt to defend the city, and the capital of Burgundy fell into Allied hands undamaged. On their right flank the French contacted the 117th Cavalry of VI Corps at Auxonne, north of Dole, thereby establishing a continuous army front. During the night of 10-11 September an armored reconnaissance group operating west of Dijon met a patrol from the 2nd French Armored Division of the American Third Army. The meeting at Sombernon linked the Normandy front with that of southern France. Whether the trap was now closed, however, it was difficult to say. Large enemy forces were reported to be still west of Dijon.

The following day, 11 September, French II Corps armor continued to push northeast toward Langres. The infantry established a static defense line west of Dijon and prepared for any future enemy attempt to break out of the closing trap. Reconnaissance elements pushed out to the northwest of the Dijon-Langres highway.

At 0700 hours on 12 September, reconnaissance troops of the 1st French Infantry Division linked in force with an armored regiment

of the 2nd French Armored Division coming from Paris. Junction took place near Chatillon-sur-Seine on the road from Dijon to Troyes. Soon



GENERAL LECLERC

*"... from Normandy through
Paris ..."*

September. Patrols reported the city free of the enemy except in the fortified citadel. Occupation of the town, however, was delayed by



GENERAL TOUZET DU VIGIER

*"... from Provence through
Lyon ..."*

mines and booby traps. There was stubborn resistance at the citadel, and Langres was not completely mopped up until 1900 hours on 13 September.

There was now a continuous front in strength from the English Channel to the Mediterranean. Less than a month after the D-Day of Operation *DRAGOON* two French armored divisions met in the heart of France. One, led by General Leclerc, had come from Normandy through Paris; and the other, under General du Vigier, had moved up from Provence through Lyon.

Inasmuch as the junction had been completed, the regrouping of the *DRAGOON*

forces according to General Eisenhower's original plan, with the

Americans on the left and the French on the right, could now be accomplished. The advance of French II Corps to the north was suspended, and the Corps was directed to regroup to the east on the left of French I Corps and on the right of American VI Corps.

Villersexel

With the right flank of Seventh Army checked by the German defense of the Belfort Gap, the Army front changed from an east-west to a north-south axis, facing the Vosges Mountains. This fan-shaped realignment took place during the second week of September. The



BURNT-OUT ENEMY GUN ON OUTSKIRTS OF VESOUL

"... In the town of . . . Vesoul . . . the Germans made determined stands . . ."

entire Army pivoted on the French I Corps, which held the extreme right flank. The 45th Division advanced north from Baume-les-Dames to Villersexel; the 3rd Division from Besancon to Vesoul; the 36th

Division moved parallel to the 3rd on the left flank of VI Corps. The 117th Cavalry was assigned flank liaison missions.

Terrain and inclement weather operated against the Allied advance. The rolling foothills of the Vosges were admirably suited for delaying actions. Rain had softened the roads, and fog reduced possible air support. In the towns of Villersexel, Vesoul, Lure, and Luxeuil the Germans made determined stands. Their line of communications west of the Vosges was to be held open as long as possible in order to gain time to prepare the Vosges defense and complete regrouping.

After enemy resistance in Baume-les-Dames had collapsed, the 45th Division moved forward against increasing opposition. From



M-4 TANK DESTROYED BY GERMAN FIRE

"... The enemy was employing mortars, tanks, and infantry to check any American move ..."

Baume-les-Dames the axis of advance led north to Rougemont, Villersexel, and Lure. The enemy now began to use every possible device to

slow the Allied advance. Mines were laid, booby traps planted, and physical roadblocks constructed in profusion. The use of barbed wire and increased artillery indicated that the Germans were striving for some organized defense south of Villersexel. On the Doubs at L'Isle they were employing mortars, tanks, and infantry to check any move on this pivotal position before Belfort.

At Rougemont the 180th Infantry captured quantities of valuable equipment, including nine locomotives, two dynamos, ammunition, guns, and trucks. Beyond Rougemont the enemy attempted to delay the advance with fire from machine guns, mortars, 20mm flak guns, and artillery. A flanking movement from the east combined with



SUPPLIES LEFT BY FLEEING GERMANS

"... Infantry troops captured quantities of valuable equipment, including nine locomotives ..."

a frontal attack broke the resistance; 100 prisoners, two guns, and numerous vehicles were taken. American infantry frustrated German

attempts to dig in south of Villersexel by using artillery to disrupt the defenses being set up. On the western flank of the division the enemy was especially sensitive, exhibiting sharp and immediate reaction to American patrols and showing signs of becoming progressively stronger. On 12 September the Germans counterattacked but were driven back with heavy losses, though they held out tenaciously in the wooded area south of Villersexel until division artillery made their positions untenable. On 13 September, in spite of enemy armored thrusts; the 180th Infantry secured possession of Villersexel.

The 45th Division advance was now almost brought to a standstill by determined resistance all along the front from L'Isle-sur-Doubs to Villersexel. On 14 September operations were hampered by drizzling rain and poor visibility, and for two days the division front remained static. On the 16th a combined infantry-tank assault on the German-held town of Geney, just north of L'Isle-sur-Doubs, proved unsuccessful; but the enemy counterattack in the late afternoon was repulsed.

The attack on Geney was not renewed. On 16 September the 45th Division was informed that it would be relieved by the French 1st Infantry Division, which was being transferred from the Army's left flank. The 45th would then assemble north of Vesoul and upon VI Corps order resume the attack on the axis St. Loup-Bains-Epinal. After the Division moved from the right to the left flank of VI Corps, it would become the contact point with the American Third Army to the north. The general advance was not to be resumed until 20 September, pending the transfer of the French II Corps from the left flank. On 18 and 19 September the French relieved American units by moving in on the Geney-L'Isle front. The 45th Division assembled and prepared for its shift to the north to secure a bridgehead across the Moselle.

The Drive on Vesoul

While the 45th Division was covering the right flank of VI Corps and pushing from Baume-les-Dames to Villersexel, the 3rd and 36th Divisions were advancing northeast from Besancon to Vesoul. Enemy resistance had become determined and extensive. Roadblocks

were encountered on all main and secondary roads, and the troops had to make their way past demolished bridges and fallen trees protected by cleverly placed mines. The tenacity of resistance made it necessary to exploit every conceivable trail. The Ognon River, a tributary of the



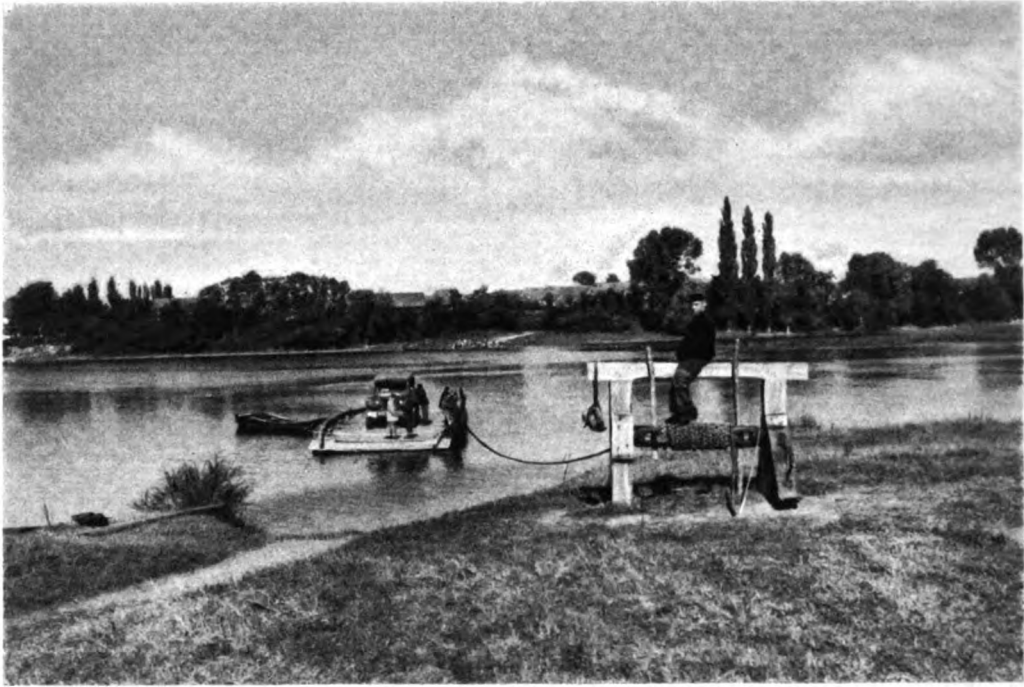
BRIDGE BLOWN UP BY THE ENEMY

"... The troops had to make their way past demolished bridges ..."

Saone, flows parallel with, and just to the north, of the Doubs. Bitter fighting took place north of Besancon to establish a bridgehead over the Ognon, but the Germans lacked both the necessary strength and artillery support to halt the advance more than temporarily.

At the Ognon River the 3rd Division found all bridges blown. An abandoned barge was improvised as a troop ferry, and on 9 September two companies of the 30th Infantry crossed. Some infantry forded the river in the face of heavy enemy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire; and a blown bridge was made usable by the engineers. A mile downstream from the 3rd Division crossing, the 36th Division also crossed the river against moderate opposition.

After crossing the Ognon the two American divisions continued to drive on Vesoul. The 3rd Division followed Highway 57, the main road from Besancon, while the 36th operated on the left, clearing towns and covering the road net to the west. By the night of 10 September



AMERICAN VEHICLE BEING FERRIED

" . . . An abandoned barge was improvised as a troop ferry . . . "

the 36th Division, operating along the Dole-Vesoul Highway, had captured over 675 prisoners in this action.

A coordinated two-divisional assault on Vesoul was now planned. The 3rd Division was to attack the city from the south and southeast, while the 36th Division sent the 141st and 143rd Infantry Regiments up the two roads from Fretigney to move in from the west. Since Vesoul was the enemy's last direct road and rail hub west of Belfort, it was believed that he would defend the city strongly. The town has significant natural defenses. It is divided by a small stream and protected on the north by a high, dominating hill. For the defense of

the town the Germans had two main battle groups, one from the 189th Division and one from the 716th Division. They were supported by two or three battalions of mixed artillery and an unknown number of tanks.

German resistance at Vesoul did not materialize as expected. On 11 September the 141st and 143rd Regimental Combat Teams cleared the area west of the city and established contact with the French II Corps at Pont-sur-Saone. The 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, successfully attacked positions on the hill mass north of Vesoul and cut the German escape routes. Meanwhile, the 3rd Division, advancing from Riez, had cleared the enemy from the area south of the city and extended east to cut the highway to Villersexel. There the 30th Infantry was covering the 45th Division's left flank and assisting in the reduction of Villersexel. The 15th and 7th Infantry Regiments outflanked Vesoul on the east, cutting the highways to Lure and Luxeuil. On 13 September, under pressure of a three-battalion attack, the German garrison in Vesoul surrendered without making the expected last-ditch stand. In addition to quantities of war materials, over 100 railroad cars, three of which were loaded with foodstuffs, were taken. The combined action of VI Corps units at Villersexel and Vesoul yielded over 1,300 enemy prisoners.

Luxeuil and Lure

The fall of Vesoul blocked the last direct escape route to Belfort in the VI Corps zone. However, to the northeast, Lure and Luxeuil still offered the enemy circuitous alternate routes. Junction with the 3rd Army in the Epinal area became necessary to deny the enemy those remaining roads. The German's primary consideration was to cover the organization and occupation of a defensive line being constructed in the Belfort Gap and through the Vosges. Agents reported an intensification of defense works in the Vosges, the strengthening of positions in the Belfort corridor, and a heavy movement of reinforcements. Farther to the north the enemy had bitterly resisted the Third Army's attempt to cross the Moselle.

Extrication of whatever forces remained west of Vesoul was

a minor problem for the enemy, to be considered only if it could be effected without endangering the combat forces holding open the routes north of Vesoul. After the VI Corps capture of Vesoul, stiff resistance was encountered northeast of the town, but there was little opposition to the northwest. The Germans continued to maintain their left flank as they executed a pivoting movement toward the Vosges Mountains. The terrain, the weather, and short lines of communications assisted these defensive operations.

The VI Corps directed the 36th Division to continue the pursuit of the enemy to the northeast with Luxeuil as the main objective. Contact was to be maintained with the French II Corps along the Saone River. The 3rd Division was directed to advance on the Vesoul-Lure-Belfort axis and to occupy Lure and positions on the left flank of the Belfort Gap. As the 3rd Division completed the occupation of Vesoul, the 36th on 12 September executed the necessary regrouping to advance on Luxeuil.

The regimental combat teams of the 36th Division advanced in three columns north from Vesoul to accomplish their mission. The 143rd Infantry advanced from positions at Pont-sur-Saone, north along the Saone River, and turned east to approach Luxeuil from the west. Advancing on the division center, the 141st Infantry followed the railroad and highway due north from Vesoul and turned northeast on secondary roads. The 142nd Infantry, on the division right, advanced along the main highway from Vesoul through Saulx to Luxeuil. The movement was slow, as the heavily-wooded country and an extensive road and trail network encouraged enemy infiltration. Enemy opposition took the form of small combat groups, which were often difficult to extricate from well-prepared timber roadblocks.

By the night of 15-16 September the approach march was completed. The 143rd Infantry was holding the woods west of the city and had cut the highway to the north; the 142nd had reached the outskirts of Luxeuil from the south and southeast, cutting the highway to Lure. At 0930 hours on 16 September the 143rd entered the town from the southwest. Resistance was light, and all fighting ceased by 1100.

In the Corps center, between the 45th Division at Villersexel and the 36th at Luxeuil, the 3rd Division advanced on Lure from the

west and southwest. The 15th Infantry followed Highway 19, the main road from Vesoul to Lure, which formed the northern side of the Vesoul-Villersexel-Lure triangle. The 7th Infantry cleared the center of the triangle, moving directly to the Villersexel-Lure Highway, then turning northeast to approach Lure from the south. On the division right flank, the 30th Infantry moved southeast, cleared the area northwest of Villersexel, and advanced on Lure east of the highway. Because the area had to be cleared of snipers and roadblocks, the operation was slow. On the morning of 16 September the 3rd Division was in position to attack Lure from the west and south, and the 15th Infantry occupied Lure during



MARCHING IN WET CLOTHES

"... The 3rd and 36th Divisions continued toward Remiremont and the Moselle ..."

the day without serious opposition. However, as at Vesoul and Luxeuil, a large portion of the Germans made good their escape to the northeast.

After the fall of Luxeuil and Lure, the 36th and 3rd Divisions continued to attack toward Remiremont and the Moselle. The 7th In-

fantry, 3rd Division, established roadblocks east of Lure on the Belfort road, while the remainder of the Division pushed north on the right flank of the 36th. Resistance similar to that encountered during the preceding week was met. Nevertheless, on 16-17 September, the Germans were pushed back another five to seven miles. But the VI Corps forward line was still more than 15 miles from the Moselle, when the advance had to be halted while awaiting the relief of the 45th Division by French II Corps and the regrouping of the Corps front. Until the advance was resumed, the divisions were to maintain an aggressive defense. Intensive artillery preparations preceded the vigorous patrols sent out. Every



AMERICAN PATROL SEEKING OUT THE ENEMY

"... Every effort was being made to maintain contact with the enemy ..."

effort was being made to maintain contact with the enemy and simulate an advance; all key positions found unoccupied were to be occupied, and all actions were to be directed toward keeping the enemy off balance and making him believe attack was imminent.

Transfer of Command

After the failure to capture Belfort early in September, the VI Corps pursuit had gradually slowed down and changed into a mopping-up operation. Any considerable advance in strength had to be postponed until adequate lines of communication were established. During this temporary lull Seventh Army forces were regrouped according to General Eisenhower's desire, and command of the DRAGOON forces was transferred from the North African to the European Theater of Operations.

Headquarters Sixth Army Group, originally designated as Advance Detachment, Allied Force Headquarters, under the command of General Devers, had been activated on 1 August 1944. After the visit of General Wilson on 4 September General Devers flew to the forward Command Post of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, to confer with General Eisenhower. General Eisenhower expressed high praise and approval of the planning and execution of Operation DRAGOON and cited reasons why Sixth Army Group should shortly take over command in southern France. September 15 was mentioned as the probable date of assumption of operational control of DRAGOON.

General Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, notified General Eisenhower on 4 September that:

I had thought that SHAEF would assume operational control of Seventh Army on the resumption of the pursuit north from Lyons. However, I am convinced that this should not operate to delay operations. Therefore, I propose to keep operational control of these operations until the establishment of signal communications make it possible for SHAEF to take over this responsibility. In the interim, I invite SHAEF to communicate his wishes to me direct and I shall be guided by his desire insofar as possible.

As the junction of the two forces approached, General Eisenhower instructed the Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group, on 7 September, as follows:

It is important that a point of junction be fixed between Third and Seventh Armies. Desire therefore that you send your representatives or direct Patton to send his representatives to *concert* measures with

Patch and decide upon a mutually agreed course of action. Decisions reached should be reported in on agreed cable to Wilson and this headquarters.

On that same day General Devers returned from his conference with General Eisenhower and visited the Seventh Army Command Post at Grenoble, where he acquainted General Patch with the agreements reached with General Wilson and General Eisenhower. General A. R. Wilson, Base Section Commander, also visited the Command Post to discuss the responsibility for rear areas. It was decided that at 0001 hours, 10 September 1944, the Coastal Base Section would be redesignated Continental Base Section and would assume control of the area south of a line Moulins-Macon-Bourg-Geneva.

The initial contact between the two forces occurred on 11 September. Between 11 and 15 September representatives of Sixth Army Group Staff, using a C-53 transport plane and a fighter escort of four P-51's, visited Allied Force Headquarters, North African Theater of Operations, at Caserta, Italy; Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, Advance Command Post at Gronville, France; European Theater of Operations in Paris; and Twelfth Army Group Headquarters at Versailles. These visits were for the coordination of mutual problems which would result from operational control of Sixth Army Group by one command, while logistical support was being furnished by another. Prior to these conferences, information as to the current employment and plans of Seventh Army was furnished G-3, Sixth Army Group, by Seventh Army.

On 11 September General White, Chief of Staff, Seventh Army, accompanied by the Assistant Chiefs of Staff, G-2, Colonel W. W. Quinn, and G-3, Colonel John W. Guthrie, departed for Paris by air to coordinate plans for the meeting of Seventh and Third Armies. The junction in force took place two days later. On the afternoon of 13 September a conference, attended by representatives of French Army B and American VI Corps, was held at the Seventh Army Command Post. Details were worked out for the regrouping of the French on the right flank of VI Corps. Since VI Corps was at Vesoul, the road net north of the Doubs was open for the transfer. On 14 September Seventh Army



GENERAL JACOB L. DEVERS

" . . . At 0001 hours, 15 September 1944 Sixth Army Group became operational . . . "

issued Field Order No. 5, setting forth in detail the procedure for regrouping French Army B.

As directed by General Wilson, at 0001 hours, 15 September 1944, Sixth Army Group became operational. The command included all Allied ground and service forces in the DRAGOON area with the exception of base section units. At the same time the responsibility for Operation DRAGOON passed from Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. Caserta and the Mediterranean scene were now history. Seventh Army had linked the two fronts.

On the afternoon of 15 September General Patch flew to Lyon to confer with General Devers. At a meeting the next day it was announced that Sixth Army Group would not actually take over control immediately, since General Devers intended to wait until Seventh Army's activities had been coordinated with those of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, and until projected operations had received approval of that headquarters. Seventh Army continued to exercise operational control over French Army B until further notice and continued to direct handling of logistical support of the operation. However, Sixth Army Group relieved Seventh Army of the responsibility for civil affairs in southern France. The transfer was gradual. General Devers made it clear that Sixth Army Group would interfere as little as possible and cooperate in every way.

A conference held at Lyon on 19 September between representatives of the Twelfth Army Group, Sixth Army Group, Third American Army, and Seventh American Army, discussed plans for the future operations of the Allied forces in eastern France. No agreement was reached as to the boundaries between the two Army Groups; General Devers' Sixth Army Group zone remained too wide for the forces available. The same day French Army B was redesignated First French Army and passed to Sixth Army Group control. The French Operational Mission departed from Seventh Army Headquarters on 21 September to be attached to Sixth Army Group. Seventh Army, reduced in size to one corps of three infantry divisions and with 35 days of continuous battle and progress behind it, prepared to cross the Moselle River.

CHAPTER XIII

The Moselle

DURING the latter part of September the tactical plans of the Seventh Army were changed to meet a new situation. For the first time since D-Day the Allied advance met an organized foe, entrenched in prepared defensive positions forming an established line. The enemy supply lines were shortened; his ranks had been reinforced; and he occupied positions on terrain that was favorable for defensive action.

German defensive operations were expected to take advantage of the terrain along four major phase lines: 1) Delaying action at advantageous positions between the Doubs and Moselle Rivers. This action had already been carried out with sufficient success to make the subsequent strategy possible. 2) A defense of the western approaches to the Vosges. 3) A defense of the reverse slope of the Vosges overlooking the Rhine, and 4) defense of the eastern bank of the Rhine River itself. As the Rhine was the last natural barrier before Germany, the enemy was expected to make maximum use of the defense in depth afforded by the Vosges Mountains.

The Vosges Mountains are divided into two chains: the High Vosges and the Low Vosges, with the Saverne Gap separating the two. North of the Saverne Gap are the Low Vosges with steep, heavily forested hills; and south of the Gap are the High Vosges, a northeast-southwest range which forms a major obstacle to the Plain of Alsace and the Rhine River. At the southern end of the High Vosges is the Belfort Gap, the main avenue of approach to the Plain of Alsace. Epinal, on the Moselle River, is a pivotal communications center and the largest town in the High Vosges region, having a peacetime population of 27,408. Two major routes from Epinal pass through the Vosges, one through

St. Die and the Saales Pass to Strasbourg and the Rhine, the other through Gerardmer and the Schlucht Pass to Colmar and the Alsace Plain.

For the VI Corps to reach the Vosges it was necessary to cross the Moselle. At Epinal the Moselle River, 80 feet wide with 20 foot vertical walls on each side, presented a formidable obstacle. Above and below Epinal, the river, less an obstacle, was in some places even fordable. Between Remiremont and Le Thillot the width averaged 50 feet and the depth, except in pools, only a few feet. The bottom, composed of rock and gravel, was usually firm. Along many sections the banks were not



AMERICAN RIVER GUARDS

" . . . At Epinal the Moselle River, 80 feet wide with 20 foot vertical walls on each side, presented a formidable obstacle . . . "

more than three feet high, and the terrain flat and fairly solid except in places softened by recent rains. The enemy was expected to take advantage of the Moselle as a natural obstacle behind which to establish some kind of defense line.

On 1 September one report stated, "There is evidence of German resistance along the Belfort-Vosges line. All barracks in Alsace and Baden completely filled with troops. Strong concentrations of artillery in Epinal and other garrisons in northeastern France." A week later it was reported that "work on fortifications had been under way for several days in great haste along the whole crest of the Vosges. Antitank guns, automatic weapons, cases of hand grenades, munitions, and food supplies are brought to aid the important points in the Vosges." On 19 September VI Corps G-2 warned that the "Vosges Mountains will make an excellent position from which to defend and it is doubtful that the enemy will evacuate without being forced to do so." The southern part of the enemy's long line from the North Sea to the Swiss border had the natural defenses of the Vosges backed by the Siegfried Line. It was calculated that fewer German divisions would be required for defense of the sector between the Swiss border and Strasbourg than would be needed on an equivalent sector farther north. The German Nineteenth Army was still opposite the American Seventh Army.

Seventh Army completed regrouping on 20 September. During the preceding two days forces of the First French Army had relieved the American units in the Villersexel area. The 45th Division now moved into a line facing the Moselle River opposite Epinal. This position, between the 36th Division and the XV Corps of the American Third Army, constituted the Seventh Army's left flank. The Seventh Army now occupied a zone approximately 12 miles wide: separated on the northeast from the Third Army by the towns of Darney, Epinal, and Rambervillers, and on the southeast from the First French Army by Lure, Melisey, and Le Thillot. Patrol and reconnaissance actions during the aggressive defense period indicated that the Germans were withdrawing beyond the Moselle. The towns of Plombières-Les-Bains and Xertigny had been evacuated by the enemy, and on 20 September the units of the VI Corps were in position to resume the assault.

At 1900 hours on 20 September General Truscott issued orders outlining the Corps plan of advance. The Moselle was to be crossed in order to obtain the key communication centers in the Vosges which would open a passage to the Alsatian Plain and the Rhine. The 45th

Division, on the left, was to seize Epinal and secure a crossing in that vicinity, then advance northeast to seize Rambervillers and Baccarat, eventually to force open the Saverne Gap. The 36th Division, in the center, was to cross the Moselle in the Eloyes area and advance without delay to seize St. Die near the Saales Pass. On the right flank, the 3rd Division was to secure crossings over the Moselle in the Rupt area and advance to seize Gerardmer near the Schlucht Pass. The 45th Division was to maintain liaison with the Third Army and the 3rd Division was to maintain liaison with the French First Army, both to protect the Corps flanks. Upon arrival on the line Rambervillers-St. Die, the VI Corps was to continue its advance with its weight on the axis Baccarat-Sarrebourg through the Saverne Gap to Strasbourg. The enemy, dug in northeast of the Moselle and in the Vosges, was prepared to oppose this maneuver; and two months passed before the final mission was accomplished.

The 36th Division Crosses at Eloyes

In the center of the VI Corps zone the 36th Division was scheduled to make the first crossing of the Moselle in the vicinity of Remiremont. Civilians reported a ford just south of Eloyes, five miles north of Remiremont. This ford had a rocky bottom, with water only waist deep, a slow current, and with a wooded bank to cover the approach of vehicles. General Dahlquist ordered a reconnaissance made all along the river. The division plan was to send the 141st Infantry Regiment to locate the ford, to secure a crossing, and to move north toward Eloyes followed by the 143rd Infantry. The 142nd Regiment was to advance through the Forest of Humont and take the town of Remiremont, on the west bank of the river. As early as 18 September river crossing equipment was being brought forward, and by the night of 20 September 65 assault boats had arrived in the 141st Regimental area and 25 DUKWs were en route. An armored treadway and infantry support bridge materials were assembled, and the division was ready for the crossing.

The 141st Infantry began the reconnaissance in force of the proposed crossing area during the afternoon of 20 September. The 2nd

Battalion reconnoitered the northern salient of the river near Eloyes, the 1st Battalion the center area opposite the reported ford, and the 3rd Battalion employed diversionary missions to distract the enemy. Shortly after 1400 hours Colonel Clyde E. Steele, Commander of the 141st Infantry, reported to General Dahlquist that chances were good for a crossing near Eloyes since no enemy activity was apparent at Longuet, about midway between Remiremont and Eloyes, and there was excellent observation available from the high ground 1,000 yards southwest of Eloyes. The Division Commander ordered the 141st Regiment to cross that night and secure Eloyes and the high ground around it. The 143rd



AMERICAN TANK CROSSING MOSELLE

"... This ford had a rocky bottom, with water only waist deep, a slow current, and with a wooded bank to cover the approach of vehicles . . ."

Regiment was to then pass through the 141st as soon as a bridgehead was secured.

The troops were guided through the dense wood between Raon-aux-Bois and the Moselle by the 60-year old Mayor of Raon-aux-Bois,

Monsieur R. M. Gribelin, a retired French Naval officer. He had often visited his daughter in Eloyes and to save a mile he would make his way through the forest. He was one of the few men who could successfully locate a route away from the roads and known trails where the Germans might discover the attempted river crossing. The night was cloudy and it rained intermittently, which added to the difficulties of guiding the troops. At 0030 hours on 21 September the 131st and 155th Field Artillery Battalions commenced firing on enemy positions across the river, and at 0500 hours radio silence was broken to determine the location of the 2nd Battalion of the 141st Infantry. The 1st and 3rd Battalions were headed for the ford site, and as dawn approached, all operations were obscured by fog in the river valley.

Shortly after 0700 hours the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, crossed the river and began advancing northward along the east bank. The leading elements encountered no opposition but the enemy soon became alerted and slowed down the advance with concentrated small arms fire. At 0914 hours, 21 September, the 1st Battalion called for additional mortar and grenade ammunition. The 3rd Battalion was still on the west side of the river.

At 0944 hours the Division Commander arrived at the fording site and ordered the 3rd Battalion to cross immediately. The engineers were ordered to get assault boats to the fording sites to carry ammunition to the 1st Battalion, and to bring back the wounded.

Leading two platoons of I Company, the 3rd Battalion Commander attempted to cross south of the 1st Battalion's fording site at a point where both sides of the river were devoid of cover for several hundred yards. The Germans waited in prepared machine gun positions on a densely wooded hill east of the river and allowed the first platoon to cross and start up the slope. Then they opened fire, killing or capturing all the platoon. The second platoon managed to escape with heavy casualties. The Battalion Commander was reported missing, and his S-3 killed in this action. As a consequence, the 3rd Battalion moved north to the fording site used by the 1st Battalion, and General Dahlquist ordered Colonel Steele to take personal command of the Battalion, to cross and expand the bridgehead. Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion had

cleared that part of Eloyes west of the river, but all three bridges had been blown. Here the current was swift, and all sites were covered by enemy small arms fire. The battalion was to remain in position and engage the enemy across the river, while the 143rd Infantry crossed below at the original ford site to attack Eloyes from the southeast.

The 143rd Infantry had moved from Luxeuil to Raon-aux-Bois to exploit the crossing over the Moselle by the 141st. At 1515 hours on 21 September, troops of the 143rd Regimental Combat Team began to cross the river in a column of battalions. They were opposed by scattered small arms fire. Having crossed the river, the 3rd Battalion moved east



BLOWN BRIDGE AT ELOYES

" . . . All three bridges had been blown up by the Germans . . . "

of Eloyes and before nightfall had seized the Hill 783 (altitude in meters) overlooking the town. The 1st Battalion attacked its objective, Hill 605 (altitude in meters), southeast of Eloyes, while under enemy artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire. The Germans, approximately one bat-

talion in strength, engaged the American infantrymen in a fierce fire fight during the night of 21-22 September from a series of strongpoints along the axis Eloyes-Hill 605. The enemy shelled American positions, and fog made it impossible to locate the enemy guns. During the same night a company of Germans had infiltrated from Hill 605 into the 1st Battalion's positions, and at dawn of the 22nd bitter hand to hand fighting raged until the Germans were cleared out.

By this time Company A of the 111th Engineer Battalion had completed an infantry support bridge at the ford site. The first vehicles began crossing the Moselle. Cannon Company, 143rd Infantry, one of



VEHICLES CROSSING THE MOSELLE

"... Company A of the 111th Engineer Battalion had completed an infantry support bridge ..."

the first to cross, moved up in close support of the 1st Battalion and laid direct fire on the enemy troops before Eloyes and on Hill 605. During the afternoon of 22 September the 143rd Regiment attacked the town;

after five hours of hand to hand fighting the town was cleared of most of the enemy.

While the 141st and 143rd Regiments were securing the bridgehead over the Moselle for the 36th Division, the 142nd occupied Remiremont, west of the river. It had moved from Luxeuil through Fougerolles and Plombieres and had sent the 3rd Battalion ahead to reduce the fort west of the town while the 1st and 2nd Battalions closed in from the south.

On 20 September the 3rd Battalion, followed a covered approach along the Forest of Humont, encountered and reduced a roadblock over 100 yards in depth. The road to Remiremont ran through a defile and the enemy occupied the northern ridge in the vicinity of an old fort overlooking the routes into town. One company was ordered to clear the enemy out with a flanking movement to the left. No fire was received from the fort, but the area around it was well covered. When it was reached, the fort was found unmanned. Company L gained the high ground overlooking Remiremont and, although hemmed in by fire from three sides, effectively supported the slow, steady advance of the battalion into town. Artillery and mortar fire was directed from this high ground on enemy vehicles attempting to escape across the bridge north of town.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions were advancing from the south. The 2nd Battalion reduced two roadblocks and then followed a secondary road through a deep defile. Steep slopes covered with woods and dense underbrush rose on each side. The heavy forest prohibited the effective use of artillery and mortars, separated the advancing infantry files, and encouraged enemy infiltration. In the confusion of a daylight attack by the enemy on the morning of 21 September, part of E Company was lost; and F Company was forced southeast into the 1st Battalion area. The 1st Battalion, in the Forest of Herival, south of Remiremont, had encountered and passed 16 roadblocks. By nightfall of the 21st, the 1st and 2nd Battalions were in position to assault the town. The 3rd Battalion, harassed by sniper fire, had taken a small portion of western Remiremont. By morning of 23 September the Germans had withdrawn,

except for rear guard elements; and the 142nd Infantry had neutralized an anchor of the enemy's organized defense line overlooking the Moselle.

At 0645 hours on 22 September the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 141st Infantry, had been withdrawn from their positions at Eloyes and were directed to move south to assist the 142nd Infantry in trapping and liquidating the Germans around Remiremont from the east side of the Moselle. The 2nd Battalion of the 141st Regiment remained in its positions in the western part of Eloyes. At 0800 hours it was attached to the 143rd Infantry on division order. The 143rd Infantry, reinforced, finished mopping up in Eloyes during the day of 22 September. The



MOVING UP TO THE ATTACK

" . . . The 141st Infantry was directed to move south to assist the 142nd Infantry . . . "

next morning it was ordered to move up a secondary road north from Eloyes to seize and clear Docelles, a reported focal point of enemy strength. While the 143rd Infantry was engaged in clearing Eloyes on

22 September, the 141st Infantry, less its 2nd Battalion, moved south along the eastern bank of the Moselle.

After occupying hills east of the Moselle and overlooking Remiremont the 141st Infantry secured a bridge site and cut the eastern escape route of Germans still fighting in the town. A patrol was sent across to contact the 142nd Regiment, now busy cleaning out the town of Remiremont opposite the bridge site. Street fighting continued in Remiremont during the morning of 23 September, as the German rear guard elements withdrew and fought delaying actions. By noon enemy resistance was broken and sniper fire had ceased. The 36th Engineer



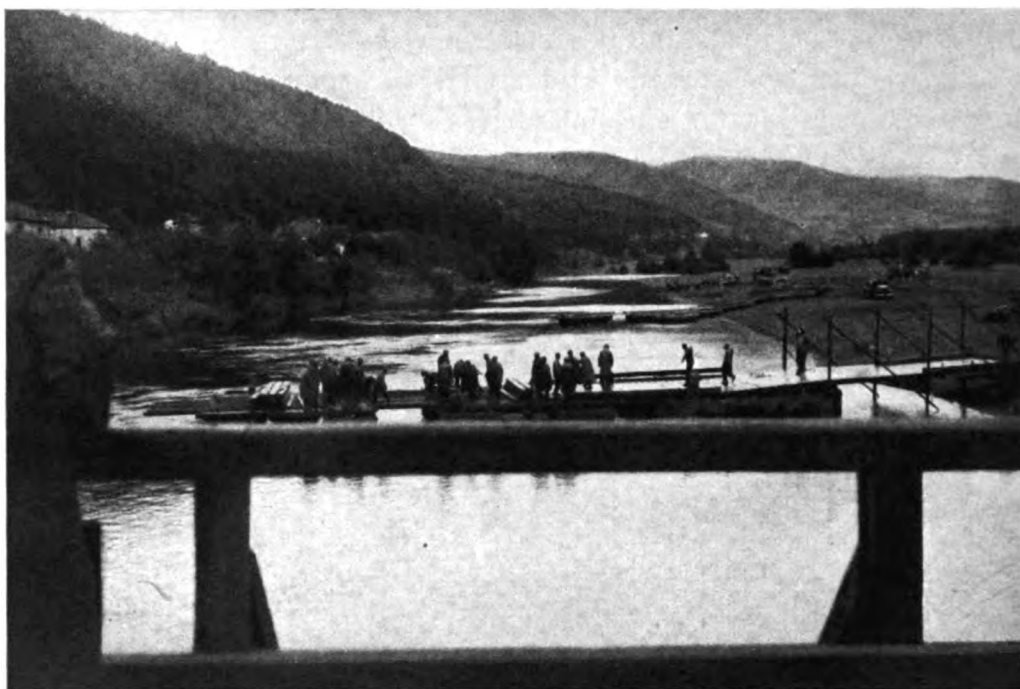
BAILEY BRIDGE SPANNING MOSELLE AT REMIREMONT

"... The 36th Engineer Regiment immediately began construction of a Bailey bridge which was completed the following morning ..."

Regiment immediately began construction of a Bailey bridge, which was completed the following morning. Without waiting for the completion of the Remiremont bridge, the 142nd Infantry sent the 1st and 2nd Bat-

talions across a temporary ponton bridge. Recent rains had swollen the river and approaches on both sides were so deeply rutted and mired that it was impassable for traffic heavier than one-quarter ton vehicles.

By 24 September the 36th Division had succeeded in crossing



ENGINEERS WORKING ON PONTOON BRIDGE

"... A heavy pontoon bridge constructed at Jarmenil insured communications for heavy traffic irrespective of weather conditions ..."

the Moselle and in establishing a firm bridgehead from Remiremont north to Jarmenil, about two miles northwest of Eloyes. The Bailey bridge at Remiremont and a heavy ponton bridge constructed at Jarmenil insured communication for heavy traffic irrespective of weather conditions. The division advance and build-up continued while the remainder of VI Corps crossed at locations above and below.

The 45th Division Crosses at Igney and Arches

To the north of the 36th Division, the 45th Division was making its own advance to cross the Moselle and to secure a bridgehead.

By 19 September relief of the 45th Division had been completed and its sector on the approaches to Belfort had passed to the control of the 1st French Infantry Division. The 45th Division moved north to its new zone, southwest of Epinal, and prepared to resume the attack. Plans called for the 157th Infantry Regiment to cross on the left between Epinal and Chatel-sur-Moselle, the 180th in the center at Epinal, and the 179th on the right at Arches. One company of the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion, the division engineers, was placed in support of each Regiment. VI Corps also furnished additional engineer support. The 2nd Battalion, 36th Engineer Combat Regiment, with two bridge trains, was attached to the division. One train consisted of 130 feet of Bailey bridge loaded on DUKWs, five units of infantry assault bridge, and eight 10-man rubber assault boats; the other train, of 240 feet of treadway bridge. Both trains were in a preliminary assembly area at Bains-les-Bains by nightfall of 21 September. The engineers were then in position to support the infantry crossings.

The 157th Regiment was to be on the northern flank of the division, occupying a key position between the Third and Seventh Armies. On 19 and 20 September the regiment shuttled approximately 80 miles, moving through Bains-les-Bains to the vicinity of Darnieulles, northwest of Epinal. Patrols were sent along the river to find undamaged bridges or fordable points. Fortunately, a bridge built by the American XV Corps at Chatel was available, although it was inside the Third Army sector. The night of 21-22 September the 1st Battalion, with two platoons of tanks, one platoon of cannon company, and one platoon of 57mm antitank guns attached, shuttled across the Chatel bridge, detrucked, and assembled at Vaxoncourt, almost two miles southeast of Chatel.

The 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry, was to clear the town of Thaon, midway between Chatel and Epinal, then cross the Moselle in the vicinity of Igney. After several enemy roadblocks had been overcome and Thaon had been heavily shelled, patrols moved into the town during the night of 21-22 September. The battalion waded the Moselle at a point near Igney; armored and artillery support crossed at the Chatel bridge and rejoined the unit on the east side of the river. Attacking

south, the Americans caught the enemy off guard, and in a two-hour fire fight before dark on 22 September drove him back with heavy casualties. The men of the 3rd Battalion dug in for the night. The 2nd Battalion, meanwhile, had crossed the river at Chatel and attacked southeast toward Domevre, where it was held up through 24 September by determined enemy resistance.

To expand the bridgehead, the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, on 23 September, pressed southeast up the Moselle Valley toward Hill 375 (altitude in meters) near the town of Girmont and at this point received intense fire. Tree bursts took their toll as the infantry attempted to clear the woods on the slopes of Hill 375. On 24 September resistance from the hill still prevented entrance into Girmont. During the afternoon Company B forced its way up the height and broke the German resistance. Groups of Germans attempted to cross the northwest slope of the hill from Girmont and were promptly pinned to the ground by heavy fire. The 3rd Battalion gained important ground in a strategic position on the west side of the town. Fighting back only spasmodically, the Germans retreated in disorder, and suffered heavy casualties when they attempted to race across the open ground. Two companies, aided by armor, pushed in toward Girmont against intense fire. The town was entered at 1500 hours and by nightfall resistance had been cleared.

After the 157th Infantry had reached Igney on 22 September the engineers made reconnaissance for crossing sites. As tactical considerations did not require vehicular bridges, only ford sites were considered. After 3rd Battalion armor had crossed at Chatel and worked back to the foot troops who had waded the river at Igney, enemy pressure on the far bank lessened and construction could now proceed. Company A, 120th Engineers, on the morning of 22 September, developed a ford at Igney, capable of carrying all regimental vehicles.

While the 157th Infantry Regiment pushed its way across the Moselle at Igney and fought against the enemy north of Epinal, the 179th Regiment forced its passage of the river at Arches, some five miles southeast of Epinal. Preliminary reconnaissance along the river on 20 September, revealed that the Germans had blown all bridges across the Moselle between Epinal and Arches. On 21 September patrols of the

179th Infantry continued to reconnoiter possible crossings of the river, as battalions came into position between Arches and St. Laurent, some four miles to the northwest. During the afternoon supporting engineers brought up assault boats and bridging materials. Patrols moving along



ASSAULT BOAT CROSSING THE MOSELLE

" . . . The 157th Infantry pushed its way across the Moselle at Igney and fought against the enemy north of Epinal . . . "

the western bank of the Moselle encountered intermittent small arms fire from across the river.

At 0400 hours on 22 September Company L attempted a crossing near Arches but was withdrawn under intense mortar fire. The advance patrol suffered 27 casualties. Company I got one assault boat across unopposed, but the swift current greatly handicapped transportation of troops. However, by 0615 hours all men of Company I had reached the eastern bank near Archettes and were moving toward high ground. Troops of Company L followed and secured the town of Archettes.

The 2nd Battalion followed the 3rd across the river, running into some small arms fire. By 1330 hours the engineers had completed a bridge at Arches. The Regimental Commander crossed the river and established his command post in Archettes. During the night, 22-23 September, the 1st Battalion, less Company A which was still in contact with the enemy near St. Laurent, crossed the Moselle and was immediately dispatched to hold down the right rear. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions advanced abreast toward Mossoux, two miles northeast of Archettes. At 0630 hours on 23 September the 2nd and 3rd Battalions jumped off, while behind them organic transportation and supplies poured across the river. Enemy artillery fire was checked by counter-battery action, as the 3rd Battalion entered Mossoux and the 2nd Battalion cut the road leading northwest from the town. Mine fields, booby traps, and trees felled across the roads slowed the regimental advance.

On 24 September the 179th Infantry continued to make limited progress while consolidating the bridgehead behind the front. Although fire fights occurred, enemy infantry to the north and northwest of Mossoux generally chose to withdraw when engaged by advancing troops. To the north the 157th Infantry was making similar progress against the enemy at Girmont. Between the 157th and the 179th Regiments the 180th Infantry was engaged in the battle for Epinal.

The Battle of Epinal

The 180th Regiment, 45th Division, had been given the mission of attacking the town of Epinal. Epinal is the hub of a large network of communications, roads, and military defenses and is divided by the Moselle River, which flows between sharply cut and steep banks. For a month prior to 20 September the Germans had been strengthening the surrounding forts at Epinal, and for the last five days they had had French civilians digging trenches. Three battalions of infantry, reinforced by artillery, mortars, and antiaircraft guns, defended the town. All approaches were heavily mined and booby-trapped and were supported by strong roadblocks covered by machine gun and automatic rifle fire; city streets and the banks of the river in the vicinity of the

town were mined; two railroad over-passes had been destroyed. FFI and civilian reports stated that all bridges in Epinal were blown, with the exception of one large bridge in the center of the city and a smaller one to the south.

On 20 September the 180th Infantry regrouped southwest of Epinal and prepared to assault the town. The attack on Epinal was planned so that the 2nd Battalion would approach from the left flank near the village of Golbey and the 3rd Battalion from the right. During the afternoon of 21 September, the 3rd Battalion encountered heavy enemy automatic fire while clearing road blocks, mines, and wire entanglements along the main approaches about a mile west of the town. Tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion in support of the 3rd Battalion leveled road blocks and succeeded in taking high ground overlooking Epinal. The 2nd Battalion, moving to the north of the 3rd, encountered similar defenses. The battalions held their positions during the night through heavy concentrations of enemy artillery, tank, and rocket fire. The activity of the Germans began to change from continued withdrawal to defense in positions.

On 22 September the 180th Infantry was engaged in clearing the west side of the town. Its patrols clashed with the enemy, and the fighting took place from house to house. Many mines and roadblocks were cleared. Tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion assisted in the attack and were placed in firing position along the west bank of the river.

The infantrymen meanwhile continued to fight their way toward the river. At 1320 hours the 180th Infantry reported to the 45th Division that "we are sending a couple of girls (FFI agents) back to your place. They have a lot of information. They report there are two bridges in town The girls came over one of them. They have a map of the town that shows all the road blocks and all the mined areas. They report enemy dug in for 500 yards That has been substantiated. We can see them and are firing on them They report the place is heavily mined and there are considerable numbers of roadblocks all around the town. There is about half a regiment on both the east and west sides of the town; a majority on the east side of the town in the woods"

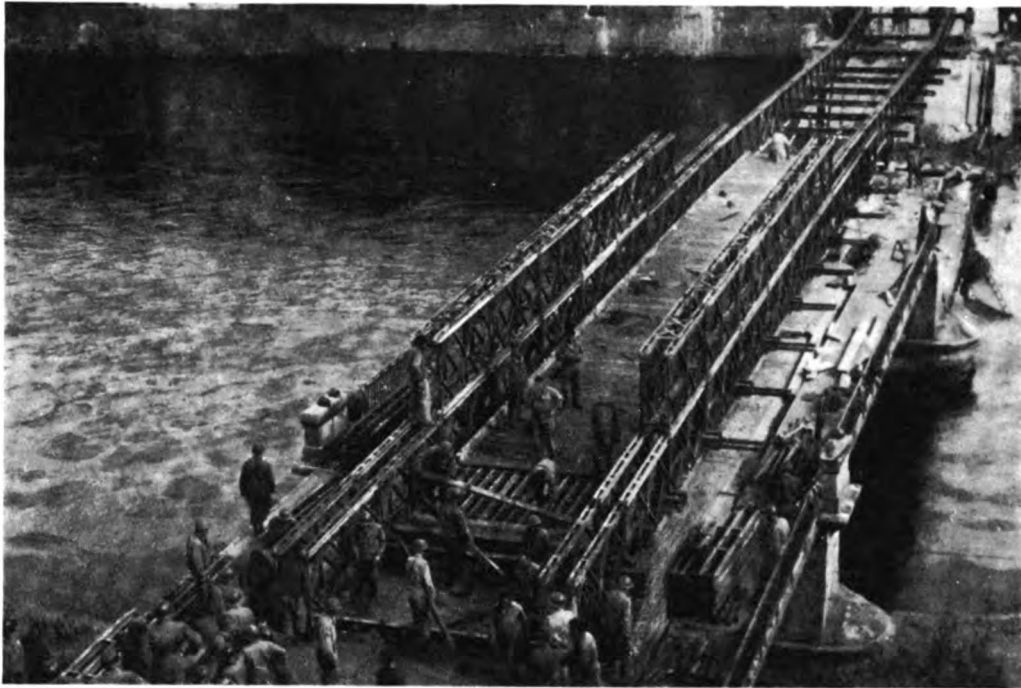
At 1500 hours on 22 September the Germans appeared to be pulling out of Epinal on roads leading eastward. American artillery started shelling traffic observed moving along these escape routes. An hour later, shortly after 1600, the report was confirmed that the Germans had pulled out most of their troops west of the river, and had blown the last two remaining bridges. The Americans pushed forward to ascertain what holding forces remained. That night the engineers made a reconnaissance for a crossing, but enemy small arms and mortar fire from both sides of the river interfered with the operation. Although all bridges had been destroyed, a Bailey bridge could be rapidly constructed at one of two possible sites in town.

On 23 September, in the face of heavy small arms, mortar, and tank fire that continued all day, the 180th forced three river crossings. The first was made in the vicinity of Golbey, just north of Epinal. Here all three rifle companies of the 2nd Battalion crossed the river and advanced toward Jeuxey, killing and capturing many of the enemy. South of the first crossing other troops of the 3rd Battalion forded the river in spite of heavy tank fire directed against them from the eastern bank and moved into houses and buildings to clear out isolated groups of the enemy. All crossings were covered by machine guns placed on the west bank and riflemen were installed in buildings close to the river to pin down the enemy.

After the first wave of infantry had crossed, the engineers put a ferry into operation to transport additional troops and supplies and to evacuate the wounded. Three attempts to put in a foot-bridge were unsuccessful because of the swiftness of the current. Finally on the night of 23-24 September two foot-bridges were established over the debris of blown highway bridges. By 0500 hours on 24 September, Company F, 36th Engineers, had moved up a bridge train and started construction of a 140-foot, Class 40, Bailey bridge. The bridge was completed by 1600 hours; and tanks, tank destroyers, and vehicles crossed to support the infantry's advance.

While the construction of the Bailey bridge was in progress, the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, crossed at first light of 24 September and passed through elements of the 2nd Battalion to press the attack to

the northeast. It reached Jeuxey and there gained control of the heights overlooking the river. On 25 September the 2nd Battalion moved north toward the expanding zone of the 157th Infantry on the division left flank and patrol contact was made; the 3rd Battalion completed clearing



140 FT. BAILEY BRIDGE ACROSS THE MOSELLE AT EPINAL

"... The bridge was completed by 1600 hours; and tanks, tank destroyers, and vehicles crossed to support the infantry's advance . . ."

Epinal of isolated Germans and secured all the prominent heights southeast of the town, making union with the 179th Infantry on the division right.

The capture of Epinal gave Seventh Army the control of the key communications center in the Vosges. In the town were found 15 locomotives and a large number of cars. Dumps of ammunition, maps, and military supplies were also taken. Epinal was important to the Seventh Army as a base for future operations in the Vosges. General Truscott personally congratulated the 180th Infantry Regiment on the success of its operation.

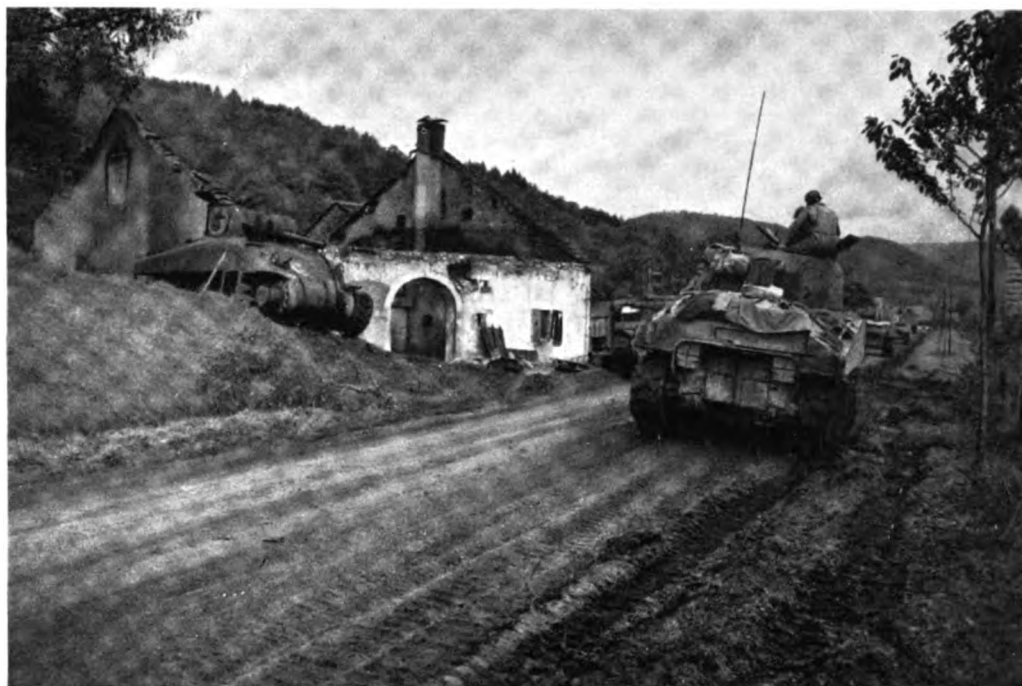
The 3rd Division Crosses at Rupt

On the right flank of VI Corps, the 3rd Division encountered the most difficult terrain and determined opposition and was last to cross the Moselle. The routes from the division positions at Faucogney and Melisey to the river at Rupt-sur-Moselle and Le Thillot led through heavily forested hill masses peculiarly adapted to defensive and delaying operations. The slowness of the French advance exposed the division right flank and retarded its progress. In the 3rd Division zone the approach to the Moselle, and not the river itself, was the chief obstacle.

At daybreak on 20 September the 3rd Division resumed the attack northeast toward the Moselle with the 7th and 30th Regimental Combat Teams moving generally northeast from the Melisey-Faucogney line. The 15th Infantry remained in reserve with one battalion in the process of being relieved by the 1st French Infantry Division on the right. By midmorning the advance had slowed down, having met stubborn resistance from the heights at the village of Melay, three and a half miles north of Melisey. This mountain village lay near the French zone and on the right flank of the Americans, in fact almost in their rear, necessitating its capture before the advance could continue. The enemy was operating largely in isolated groups and was taking full advantage of the thick woods and mountains. Roadblocks were constructed of logs and covered by 30 or 40 infantrymen armed with machine pistols, machine guns, and antitank guns. By 1130 hours the 3rd Battalion, 30th Infantry, was at the outskirts of Melay but was stopped by cross fire of machine guns and rifles. In order to envelop Melay from the north, the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, moved out from Faucogney and attacked southeast to secure La Mer, a hamlet one mile north of Melay. Continuous rains made the poor mountain roads impassable for armor. During the afternoon artillery shelled enemy defenses heavily and in return received devastating flanking fire from heights north of Melisey, still not yet cleared by the French. At dark the village was taken after a bitter house-to-house fight.

Throughout 21 September the 30th Infantry continued to attack. The width of the front, coupled with extensive enemy defenses,

precluded anything but minor advances. The 3rd Battalion was receiving fire from three sides, and its progress was measured in yards. Small groups of enemy infantry and automatic weapons teams infiltrated into forward positions by crawling and creeping through the woods. At a



MOVING TO THE FRONT

"... The attack was launched north and west of the main road out of Faucogney . . ."

given signal they attacked, and such attacks increased in size and tempo until they came about every half hour. Enemy artillery was particularly active, and tree bursts caused many casualties.

The 7th Infantry, on the division left flank, launched its attack north and west of the main road out of Faucogney and advanced steadily until it occupied the forest heights overlooking the Moselle (Hill 753, altitude in meters). At 1800 hours on 21 September the 3rd Battalion in the lead reported, "The fighting in the woods is pretty tough. The undergrowth makes movement difficult. The battalion has been having quite a fire fight." The woods were dense and the troops advanced

by crawling toward unseen enemy positions. The Germans occupied prepared positions in the clearings and semi-open places, generally well camouflaged with branches and small logs. In the early morning of 23 September the 7th Infantry succeeded in driving back the Germans and in reaching the Moselle across from Rupt.

The 30th Infantry, after the fight at Melay, attacked toward the Moselle along the southeastern side of the highway from Faucogney to Rupt. During 22 September intense and violent fighting took place along the route, especially in the vicinity of the village of Evouhey, where the enemy was well dug in. Roads in the regimental zone were blocked and mined. The next day the 3rd Battalion was ordered to turn east and seize high ground overlooking Le Thillot on the Moselle, while the 1st Battalion continued to clear Evouhey, and the 2nd Battalion attacked Esmoulières, a German strongpoint south of Evouhey and in the division rear right flank.

By the end of 23 September the 7th Infantry was in position to cross the river and attack the town of Rupt. About midnight one platoon of Company B found a bridge intact. The troops crossed the river and began to fight off enemy attempts to blow the bridge, which had already been prepared with 19 boxes of TNT. Other companies quickly followed, and by 0500 hours an extensive bridgehead had been firmly established. By midmorning all units of the regiment had crossed the Moselle. On 24 September the 1st Battalion cleared Rupt of snipers and occupied the heights to the east of town (Hill 867, altitude in meters). Other elements of the regiment advanced south from the bridgehead to reach La Roche against considerable resistance and north to seize a second bridge at Maxonchamp.

The 30th Infantry attack, meanwhile had made slow progress against increasing resistance, in bad weather, with poor visibility, and over rugged terrain. On 25 September 30th Infantry troops were two miles south of Rupt, held up by German defenses at Le Chêne, on the road running along the west bank of the Moselle. The highway was almost completely blocked with heavily-mined fallen trees. The enemy from well defended positions met the 30th Infantry's advance with fire

from small arms, mortars, self-propelled, and 20 mm flak guns. The Americans were forced to make their way forward through pouring rain and dense woods. Le Chene was taken at 1620 hours, and the regimental objectives on the hill overlooking Le Thillot were secured before noon,



A BRIDGE INTACT

"... The troops crossed the river and begun to fight off enemy attempts to blow the bridge, which had already been prepared with 19 boxes of TNT ..."

26 September. The area was then turned over to the French, and the 30th Infantry was ordered to move by motor to Remiremont, in the 36th Division sector, and to cross to the east bank.

The Drive Into The Vosges Passes

In the last week of September VI Corps had successfully crossed the Moselle. The east bank within the Seventh Army zone was being cleared of the enemy; and bridges at Epinal, Arches, Jarrenil,

Eloyes, Remiremont, Maxonchamp, and Rupt were in operation. Prisoners stated that initial orders had been to withdraw to Germany but that these were later changed and units were ordered to hold for 20 days, because fortifications near the German border would not be finished until then. The Germans had fought stubbornly to hold the Moselle line and now continued to contest every foot of the advance toward the passes through the Vosges.

The 36th Division, with three regiments abreast, advanced from its Eloyes-Remiremont bridgehead northeast toward its objective, St. Die. The 141st Infantry on the right was to clear a reported enemy concentration at St. Ame, four miles east of Remiremont. The advance over muddy secondary roads was painfully slow; only $\frac{1}{4}$ ton vehicles could be used to bring up supplies and ammunition and evacuate the wounded. On the night of 24-25 September, following a concentrated artillery barrage, the 1st Battalion of the 141st Infantry penetrated the town, and captured the German commander, his staff, and 185 men. The next day this area was taken over by the 3rd Division; and the 141st Regiment moved to support the 143rd, attacking toward Bruyeres.

On 28 September General Truscott ordered the 36th Division to advance on Bruyeres, the 141st Infantry operating to the right of the Jarmenil-Bruyeres road, the 143rd moving up the ridge to the left of the road, while the 142nd was to finish clearing the Forest of Fossard and the village of Tendon on the division right flank.

The 142nd had already reached the vicinity of Tendon on 24 September. Strong enemy forces were found prepared to defend the town and the Hill 827 (altitude in meters) southeast of it; an estimated 400 to 600 Germans were in the area. The only supply route across the hill mass between Eloyes and Tendon was a single, little-used, cart trail, which was impassable for armor or heavy vehicles. On 25 September the regiment maneuvered to close in on Tendon but met a severe enemy counterattack. Artillery support was called for to forestall a possible breakthrough, and companies from the division reserve were quickly brought up to the threatened area. Fighting continued throughout the day. At nightfall the Americans withdrew to more favorable defensive

positions in order to close the line, which was being constantly threatened by German infiltration.

The 142nd Infantry, now reinforced, reorganized on a three-battalion front and put its supply line in order. The new arrangements proved effective. The 2nd Battalion entered Tendon against stiff resistance on the 27th. The enemy, attempting to escape in the direction of Le Tholy, launched a sudden attack on the 1st Battalion center, east of Tendon, and laid down a heavy artillery barrage on the 3rd Battalion. Desperate fighting followed, as depleted companies attempted to maintain an established line in the thickly-wooded hills. The enemy hid out in pockets or infiltrated back into areas previously cleared. By 29 September the heights east of Tendon (Hill 827) were finally cleared of the enemy at a cost of 80 casualties in the 1st Battalion. The 142nd Regiment had thus secured its objective and continued fighting to hold it. The next day the enemy, supported by heavy artillery and mortar fire, again vainly counterattacked the hill positions. The fighting during the week had been costly. Many companies, weakened by casualties and fatigue, were down to platoon strength.

On the left flank of the 36th Division the 143rd Infantry, supported by elements of the 141st, drove northeast along the Bruyeres highway. The Germans threw in many artillery concentrations and in this open terrain employed mines extensively. By the end of the month the village of Docelles, Xamontarupt, Faucompiere, and St. Jean du Marche had been taken and a continuous line established with the 179th Infantry, 45th Division, on the left and the 142nd Infantry on the right. The 36th Division was still over four miles from Bruyeres but in favorable position for the attack.

The route of the 45th Division to Rambervillers from Epinal led through more open country, and its advance met with greater success. Striking from their crossing areas, the regimental combat teams followed Highway 46 from Epinal, and cleared the road net and villages east of the 36th Division area. Action consisted chiefly of reducing roadblocks and of the occupation of towns.

The 157th Infantry attacked northeast from its position near Thaon, driving the enemy from Domevre, and then swung to the

southeast to within striking distance of Sercoeur. On 26 September the regiment occupied Sercoeur and pressed again on to the northeast to take Padoux, five miles from Rambervillers. A drizzling rain hampered operations on the 27th; but the advance continued, and on the following day troops of the regiment were within a mile of the objective. Patrols entered Rambervillers on the morning of 29 September but were withdrawn in the afternoon while French armor from the XV Corps attacked from the northwest. At dawn on 30 September after a 15 minute artillery barrage, the 157th entered Rambervillers and met only spasmodic resistance. The town was secured, and by nightfall defensive positions were set up.

Advancing from Epinal the 180th Infantry, in the 45th Division center, likewise made good progress over favorable terrain. The Germans were withdrawing and no serious opposition was encountered. By 26 September the regiment had reached Girecourt, and Gugnecourt about seven miles south of Rambervillers. The 2nd Battalion took Girecourt with little opposition and pushed on to secure Destord, two miles north. Company E cleared Gugnecourt, taking 64 prisoners; but a counterattack during the night forced it to withdraw. The next day the Americans attacked again and retook the town.

The 1st Battalion, 180th Regiment, attacked from Destord northeast toward Ste. Helene. The 2nd Battalion turned southeast from Destord toward Pierrepont, which was captured in the afternoon of 28 September. On 28 September the 180th Infantry took 213 prisoners, the largest total during any single day of the month. The regiment was then ordered to assist the 179th Infantry in the attack on Grandvillers, a major road junction on the highways connecting Epinal and Rambervillers with Bruyeres.

The 179th Infantry, operating south of the 180th and in conjunction with the 36th Division on the right, had advanced through the forest of Epinal, east of the city, by 25 September. Progress was impeded by increasingly thick woods, mine fields, and booby-trapped roadblocks. However, after three days fighting, the regiment had taken several villages on the approaches to Grandvillers and had advanced through Memenil. Nevertheless, resistance became increasingly severe

as the infantry approached Grandvillers. During the afternoon of 28 September the 2nd Battalion, with tanks in support, assaulted Vimenil and reached the outskirts of Grandvillers by nightfall. The following day the advance was checked by heavy enemy fire from along the Grandvillers road. However, the advance of the 180th Infantry from Pierrepont into the enemy's rear forced him to divide his forces.

On 30 September the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, attacked the enemy in Grandvillers and engaged in fierce street fighting. By 0745 hours the western end of the town was secured and 30 prisoners taken. Throughout the day the battalion continued the attack, and by 1925 hours Grandvillers had been completely occupied.

The 3rd Division, after securing the bridgehead at Rupt, released to the French the southern sector of its front at Le Thillot and on 27 September shifted its attack north to the highway from Remiremont through Le Tholy to Gerardmer. To attack directly from Rupt to Gerardmer was not feasible, as the high wooded hills of the Forest of Longegoutte presented a major natural obstacle. On 27 September the 30th Infantry was motorized and moved north to Remiremont where the 15th Infantry, released from reserve, was relieving the 141st Infantry, 36th Division, in the St. Ame area. The 7th Infantry continued to expand the Rupt bridgehead, sending the 3rd Battalion north along the Moselle toward Remiremont. The 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, pushed northeast through the forest toward the village of Thiefosse, while the 2nd Battalion continued up the Moselle to capture Ferdrupt and there await relief by the French II Corps.

On the high ground just east of the Moselle the Germans now occupied a definite defense line. Their withdrawals ceased; and they held on tenaciously, counterattacking frequently. The enemy resorted to jungle tactics on the 3rd Division front in the heavily-wooded terrain between the Moselle and Moselotte Rivers, and frequently infiltrated behind the American lines to ambush supply trains. It was planned to establish well-organized positions northeast of St. Ame, covering the road to Le Tholy. In this area the Germans, bringing up reinforcements, resisted fiercely, counterattacking and infiltrating to retake lost ground.

At 0600 hours on 26 September, the 15th Infantry attacked northeast from St. Ame. The 1st Battalion seized a bridge east of the town before the Germans could detonate the prepared charges and destroy it. The next day the 2nd and 3rd Battalions pushed northeast on the road to Le Tholy. Enemy groups, by-passed in the wooded areas on either side of the highway, continually threatened supply lines and slowed down the advance. The point of the advance withstood two counterattacks during the hours of darkness, while other enemy groups infiltrated in the rear near St. Ame. The striking force of the regiment was reduced by the necessity of defending the flanks in strength. By nightfall of 28 September the infantry had reached positions two miles north of St. Ame.

On 29 September the 30th Infantry joined the 15th in the attack. German infantry, supported by tanks, held strong defensive positions in front of Le Tholy. They were ordered to hold to the end, and it was reported that this order was enforced by SS troops at their rear. Heavy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire limited the American advance to yards. At the close of the month the 3rd Division was still attacking a strong enemy line before Le Tholy, meanwhile blocking to the south towards Le Thillot on the French front.

CHAPTER XIV

Problems of Rapid Advance

SPEED of the inland penetration of DRAGOON forces created logistical problems which strained all services of supply. Assault convoys were loaded out on the premise of a hard, slow campaign with priority given to infantry combat and supporting units. On the third day of the campaign supply chiefs initiated plans for changes in shipping priorities to assist in exploitation of weakened German resistance. Phasing of units to arrive after D plus 20 was adjusted to bring in services to support a war of rapid movement. General Patch received from General Devers the assurance of all possible aid in pushing the advance and, as the initial augmentation of forces to accomplish this aim, the promise of an additional six Quartermaster truck companies.

Transportation and Supply for the Beachhead

On D-Day the unloading of assault forces and supplies adhered to the planned schedule, but by D plus 1 it was evident that a shortage of gasoline and rations was imminent. In anticipation of heavy fighting on or near the beaches, a layer of ammunition had been placed over the cargo; and it was necessary to lay this aside to expedite the beaching of gasoline and rations. The VI Corps revised priority on unloading, to which schedule the Army Commander subscribed when beach control passed on 17 August from sub-task force commanders to Beach Control Groups. DUKW's and LCT's were diverted to unloading gasoline from an MT ship which had been brought in with 50,000 gallons aboard.

Diversion of efforts to meet the demand of rapidly moving troops disrupted planning schedules. Huge piles of mixed ammunition accumulated on the beaches, as labor was largely employed in with-

drawing specific items needed at the time. A shortage of chains and hoisting frames handicapped unloading, and men were unable to handle the cargo as rapidly as desired. In order to land a maximum number of combat troops with vehicles and equipment in the first days of the invasion, the numbers of supporting service troops had been held to a minimum. It also proved difficult to obtain civilian labor. The problem of labor was partially solved by the creation of pools of workers by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5.

Aggregate tonnage discharge over the beaches met expectations during the initial phase, although there was some delay in beaching D-Day supplies. In the period from 0800 15 August to 1800 17 August, 119,060 personnel, 15,717 vehicles, and 6,232 tons of cargo had been moved from ship to shore. In the succeeding 24 hours cargo discharge was boosted to 7,113 tons along with 4,929 vehicles and 17,032 personnel. The problem was not one of beach capacity at this time, but of a selective demand occasioned by operations which had departed from the plan.

Tasks confronting the Army supply services in beach operations were reflected within the assault divisions, which faced the added difficulties of rapid extension of supply lines and tactical demands for transport of combat troops. The 3rd Division encountered a D-Day delay in the beaching and unloading of supply craft which, together with the allocation of ammunition, had created a critical gasoline shortage by D plus 1. Reasons for the narrowness of the margin by which the assault divisions were able to support their operations were given by the 3rd Division G-4: 1) insufficient gasoline had been loaded under Army maintenance plan; 2) unloading of supplies for the first three days fell far behind schedule; 3) the Beach Group was slowed down by the necessity of unloading and handling thousands of tons of ammunition which were not expended for the operation; and 4) the distances from the beach supply points to the combat units became far greater than that on which the assault scale transportation was based.

Four days after landing, forward elements had pushed past Sisteron, more than 100 miles from the beaches. Gasoline continued to be the most critical item of supply. Gasoline dumps captured at Draguignan, Le Muy, and later at Digne were exploited to continue the

advance and overcome shortages within the units. The three American divisions were consuming approximately 100,000 gallons a day, when the Army Quartermaster reported on 21 August that only 11,000 gallons remained in the three beach dumps. Immediately the Seventh Army gave top priority to the unloading of gasoline and rations and tightened fuel consumption restrictions, which had been instituted at the outset.

Division supply problems increased during the Battle of Montelimar, when a growing demand for ammunition was added to the over-burdened transportation facilities. There was no shortage of ammunition in the beach dumps; but the haul was a round trip of more than 400 miles from the divisions, each of which had given over trucks, along with the VI Corps, to motorize Task Force Butler.

Expenditures of ammunition had been exceedingly light during the pursuit. As the 36th Division, however, with Task Force Butler then under its command, assembled for the Battle of Montelimar, it was without sufficient transportation to complete the assembly, provide adequate rations and motor fuel, and re-supply the artillery units with ammunition. Organic transport of the division, augmented by the advanced issue of trucks phased in for loss replacements, was further supplemented by VI Corps, which created a 30-truck ammunition train from the 3rd Division. Twenty trucks were to haul 105mm howitzer, and ten trucks 155mm howitzer ammunition in preparation for concentrated fire on enemy convoys in the Rhone Valley. The combined effort enabled the artillery units to fire an average of 96.2 rounds of 105 mm howitzer ammunition per weapon per day in a two-day period with an average of 99 weapons in action. This was a peak expenditure in the first month and a half of the campaign of southern France. With an average of 30 pieces firing daily, the 155mm howitzer units sent 34 rounds per weapon into the target area, while a battalion of 155mm guns, with eight pieces in action, averaged 37.4 rounds per gun. By comparison, during the 17 days of action in August, average expenditures per weapon per day were 30 rounds of 105mm howitzer, eight rounds of 155mm howitzer, and 6.5 rounds of 155mm gun.

The initial crisis on artillery ammunition had been overcome, but the shortage of gasoline persisted in forward areas. To alleviate the

situation Seventh Army employed trucks of newly arriving units to convoy motor fuel forward. On 25 August VI Corps estimated gasoline requirements as: 36th Division, 50,000 gallons; 45th Division, 35,000 gallons; 3rd Division, 25,000 gallons, and Corps troops, 10,000 gallons. Daily journals of the units reflected temporary periods in which the gasoline supply was exhausted. At Digne 26,000 gallons of gasoline, captured on 24 August, relieved shortages for the 36th Division when it was closing in at Montelimar.

Rail Rehabilitation

Forward elements of the Army were more than 200 miles inland and spread from Montelimar eastward through Grenoble to Briancon on the Franco-Italian border, when completion of a rail link between Frejus and St. Maximin enabled the Army Quartermaster to open the initial forward supply dump on 24 August. Gasoline, rations, and ammunition were stocked at St. Maximin, a town on Highway 7 between Brignoles and Aix.

Completion of the Frejus-St. Maximin rail line opened the first section of the Army supply route, to be used until the ports of Marseille and Toulon could be put into operation. This was the first step in the rail rehabilitation program expedited to meet requirements of lengthening supply lines. By D plus 15 the Seventh Army held Lyon. Arrival of units and material for reconstruction of the French rail network had been phased, however, on the premise that Lyon would be a D plus 150 objective. While reconstruction and operation of the railroads was a responsibility of the Military Railway Service, late phasing required Army engineers to perform most of the initial repair, especially that of bridging.

Major scale rail operation had not been contemplated, until a rail terminal such as Marseille had been captured. Railroad troops had been phased in sufficient quantity only for minor rehabilitation. Two railway battalions had been scheduled to arrive coincident with the capture of the ports, with the Railway Grand Division arriving in echelons. Tactical developments prompted the Transportation Section

on D plus 2 to request the shipment of rail units advanced by approximately 30 days.

So precipitous was the German retreat that time and means were denied for destruction of railway trackage as completely as the enemy had effected in Italy, and air reconnaissance indicated available rolling stock exceeded early estimates. Allied air attacks on enemy trains had created blocks, one of which was 18 miles long and made up of such heavy equipment that it was necessary to lay a new track for the by-pass. Principle enemy damage consisted of bridge demolitions.

Initial rail operations were on a 15-mile, narrow-gauge line between St. Tropez and Cogolin, with five wagons and a Diesel passenger unit on D plus 2. Service from Frejus to St. Maximin, completed on D plus 9 utilized a main coastal line, exploitation of which had been planned. Three hundred tons of gasoline, rations, and ammunition were loaded on the first train for St. Maximin, while a similar train departed the same day for Draguignan, on a branch line from Les Arcs. By 27 August track repair permitted the shift of loading from Frejus to St. Raphael, where a better equipped station was available, and daily tonnage was lifted to 900 tons.

First extended westward to Aix-en-Provence, rails were then rehabilitated northward to Meyrargues on the Durance River, where the first major break was encountered. Freight was moved by a combination of rail and motor shuttling, with rail transportation from Camel Beach to Meyrargues and truck transportation for about 70 miles from there to Sisteron, the southern terminal of a small capacity line to Grenoble which had been rehabilitated by VI Corps. The gradient of the Sisteron-Grenoble line limited its capacity to 125 tons per train with five to nine trains operating daily. Initial operation beginning 24 August of a portion of the line, from St. Julien just north of Aspres to Grenoble, was an enterprise of the 45th Division which enabled it to free a substantial number of trucks for the 370 mile roundtrip to the Army dump at St. Maximin. In five days the division moved 2,100 tons of freight and 4,700 personnel over its line.

As troops of the Seventh Army advanced they secured additional rolling stock and locomotives. By 3 September the Army had

available 1,300 wagons and 100 engines, although many were in poor condition. Coal was limited and of low quality. A week later rail service was extended from Grenoble via Chambéry and Culoz to Amberieu, where track demolitions had tied up more than 250 German wagons along with 6,000 tons of coal. Failure of the enemy to destroy a power plant permitted the Chambéry-Culoz portion of the line to be operated with electric power.

The task of rail reconstruction fell to the Army engineers who, on 30 August, were confronted with tactical operations of the D plus 60 anticipated phase, while bridge equipment was arriving for the D plus 14 phase. Improvisation was necessary as heavy fixed and floating equipment was not scheduled to arrive in quantity until D plus 25. Except for portable military bridging construction, materials were obtained from local sources. Stocks of structural material steel were moved to bridge sites from Marseille before complete surrender of the German garrison in that city, while facilities of steel fabricating shops in Grenoble, machine shops in Ornans, lumber mills in the Jura and Doubs areas, oxygen and acetylene from a manufacturer in Chalon, and wire rope from a concern in Bourg en Bresse were utilized.

On D plus 19 supplies were delivered to forward areas both by direct truck shipment from the beaches to Grenoble, and by the rail shuttle from Camel Beach to Meyrargues, truck to Sisteron, and rail to Grenoble. For operation of the rail lines, rail units were being brought in 15 to 30 days earlier than originally planned. By D plus 45 railroads were in operation up the Rhone Valley, from Marseille via Lyon, Dijon, Dole, and Besancon to Vesoul and St. Loup. By 2 October freight was moving by train at the rate of 550 tons 500 miles a day, the equivalent of 275,000 ton-miles per day.

During this period bridges were built partly by innovation and partly by exploitation of material at hand. The 343rd Engineer (General Service) Regiment reconstructed a bridge near Aix-en-Provence by using the 104-foot traversing base of a 270mm German gun to span two 51-foot gaps. Emplacing the gun carriage as if it were a Bailey bridge after repair of the masonry piers, the 343rd Regiment

completed the task in four days; and the first train crossed on 29 August. A new application of the Bailey bridge was employed by the same unit to restore a span over the Durance River near Meyrargues. To close the gap of 170 feet a pier was constructed at midpoint and a Bailey deck panel was projected. Although it had not been used previously over so long a clear span, calculation proved that such a support would bear the required load capacity. The bridge was reopened at 1200 hours, 17 September.

Next in priority to restoration of the Grenoble route was reestablishment of the doubletrack line from Marseille to Lyon; the greatest difficulties were three bridge demolitions over the Durance River at Avignon, over the Drome at Livron, and over the Isere north of Valence. The 343rd Engineer Regiment completed the construction of the bridges in 15, four, and nine days, respectively, the last by 20 September, ahead of the target date of 1 October set by Sixth Army Group. The early completion of the bridges insured supply by rail ahead of expectations.

Concurrently with the completion of the route to Lyon, other units were engaged in repairs northward. Seventeen days after the area had been cleared, the 540th Engineer Regiment opened the last blocks on a through route from Marseille to Bourg with the spanning of the Ain River at two points near Pont d'Ain. Farther north the 344th Engineer (General Service) Regiment, by 5 October had constructed the longest continuous railroad bridge in the northward push, a 460-foot Bailey deck bridge over the Doubs River at Dole.

Opening of rail lines enabled the Seventh Army supply services to set up advance dumps and to reduce distances combat units were required to transport supplies. On 25 August the Quartermaster had opened a dump at Sisteron, using rail and truck shuttle; but truck transportation was falling behind commitments and the railhead at St. Maximin was low on gasoline. Opportune arrival of two coasters with 6,000,000 gallons and operation of bulk gasoline installations at Camel Beach alleviated the shortage on 28 August. The problem became one of transportation. The lack of a bridge at Meyargues denied a continuous

rail line to Grenoble and motor transport was overtaxed by the demands. The situation was becoming more critical daily.

Transportation and Supply Above Montelimar

To meet the urgent demand for transportation of troops for the pursuit without withdrawing trucks from the long supply haul, VI Corps organized on 3 September three provisional truck companies from organic units. Corps artillery units contributed a share of the vehicles, as did the 36th and 45th Divisions, which organized the provisional groups. On 9 September corps artillery warned that resupply of ammunition was a serious problem because of the distances involved and one which could not be met against organized resistance, which induced General Truscott to radio General Patch: "Present advance is resulting in excessive distances for units to travel to get ammunition. One division has a round trip haul of over 400 miles to ammunition dump at Bourgoin. Urgently request that advance ammunition dump be set up at least as far north as Lons le Saunier." Army agreed to open an ammunition supply point by 13 September in the vicinity of Mouchard, which was about 30 miles north of Lons Le Saunier. Its establishment did not solve the problem for the corps, however; and on 14 September a battalion of corps artillery was made inactive so that its transportation could be used for ammunition hauls.

As elements had prepared for the push to capture Lyon, the distances between combat units and sources of supply became even more extended. Transportation for the rapid inland movement had engulfed the fuel, trucks, and driving personnel provided by planners who had not looked forward to such a pattern of progress. At the beginning of September VI Corps computed distances as great as 213 miles between the 45th Division Command Post at Amberieu and the Army's gasoline and ration railhead and ammunition supply point at St. Maximin; 165 miles from the 3rd Division Command Post at Voiron; and 158 miles from the 36th Division Command Post at Bonchert. Advance of Army dumps permitted by extension of railroads provided relief from time to

time during September, but the continuing progress of the three infantry divisions resulted in recurring lengthy gaps.

Opening of dumps stocked with food, fuel, and ammunition on 2 September at Bourgoin, La Tour de Pin, and Montelimar reduced distances to divisional Command Posts to 24, 30 and 83 miles for the 3rd, 45th, and 36th Divisions, respectively; but on 10 September, with Army food and fuel dumps at Amberieu, the divisions were at Devecer, Baume les Dames, and Velefaux, 118, 128, and 135 miles beyond, and Corps headquarters, at Besancon, was 111 miles distant. Establishment of an ammunition supply point on 12 September at Arbois whittled the transportation haul 72, 60, and 75 miles for the three divisions which were then at Mollans, Cubrial, and Luxeuil. Three days later the source of ammunition was the closest it had been since departure of the divisions from the beaches: three miles for the 36th Division, four and one half miles for the 3rd Division, and eight miles for the 45th Division. But the haul for gasoline and rations was not as short, for the dumps at Poligny were on 21 September, 87 miles from the 3rd Division at Faugogney, 95 miles from the 45th Division at Bains Les Bains, and 102 miles from the 36th Division at Hadol.

Development and extension of rail lines coincident with the increasingly static tactical situation began to ease the acute shortage in transportation near the end of September with the rail link operative from Marseille through Lyon and Dijon to Vesoul operative by 28 September. It was not until later that rail lines were able to carry the approximately 5,000 tons of supplies and equipment needed daily by the Army. During the period from D-Day there had not been an adequate number of transportation units available to the Army, which in turn had imposed additional burdens on lower echelons. Although rail shipments had met minimum daily requirements, extended supply lines had resulted in dangerously low levels with reserves almost depleted.

Approach of winter weather necessitated a speeding up of delivery of clothing items to forward dumps. To accomplish this, B-24 aircraft of the XII Tactical Command flew 50 tons of Quartermaster Class II supplies into Dole and Dijon; but all articles except 30,000 pairs of socks were found to be Class X (unserviceable) upon arrival. On 28

September VI Corps reported, however, that sufficient winter underwear was en route by rail to equip each man with one set and that issue of the third blanket per man had commenced. But the Army's plan for supply of winter clothing to the troops was jeopardized by unloading at Marseille falling behind schedule. Furthermore, the Army's supply services were confronted with assumption of supply responsibility for the XV Corps, which had a strength of 50,000.

Although distances involved were not as great as with the American divisions, the French Army, for whose supply the Seventh Army was responsible initially, likewise was encountering difficulties. On 10 September the French Army was receiving three trains each day for shipments to Aix and Avignon, from which supplies were trucked to Mison and Laragne for trans-shipment by rail to the French dumps. Seventh Army established ammunition supply points to support the French on 21 August at Fuget Ville, on 24 August at La Bauque, on 9 September at La Baumette, and on 11 September at Lons le Saunier, through which an average of 300 tons daily was being handled. Truckheads for Quartermaster Class I and III supplies (Rations and Fuel) were opened 1 September at Avignon and 6 September at Mison and St. Andre la Gaz, the latter stocking only rations. The railhead had been opened 24 August at La Barque. An engineer supply truckhead was established 1 September at Avignon.

Although Seventh Army was relieved 15 September of operational control and direction of the First French Army upon assumption of command by the Sixth Army Group, supply responsibility continued to 26 September, when base section began its functions in the supply plan for support of both armies. Technical and physical difficulties combined, however, to prevent complete separation until late in October. At the end of September the French Army described its supply situation as critical with heavy engagements on its entire front, which prompted the Seventh Army Chief of Staff to authorize aid through an equitable allocation of available supplies between the two armies. Receipts by rail were falling below daily requirements and for a short period, pending the time train schedules could be rearranged, the Seventh Army allocated the French 65,000 gallons of gasoline, 53,000

rations, and 279 tons of ammunition daily. Inadequacy of supply prevented the Seventh Army from granting the total requests of the French in certain types of ammunition, principally light artillery, mortar, light machine gun, and automatic rifle shells.

Signal Operations

Fast moving warfare provides abundant problems for all forces involved, but the strain on communications is perhaps the most noticeable. Just prior to D-Day, two radio tests were held by all headquarters ships at specific times during the day and night to determine the efficiency of the radio installations and what, if any, frequencies were unworkable. Every radio set that went into Operation DRAGOON was tuned to a proper frequency, and fortunately conditions were ideal for radio communication during the early part of the campaign.

Landing with the assault units were the signal supply personnel of the 207th Signal Depot Company and the 177th Signal Repair Company. Also with the initial assault groups were the signal operations personnel of the 71st, 72nd, and 74th Signal Special Companies to handle communications for the three division beach groups. One detachment of the depot and repair companies kept each of the three American assault divisions supplied with signal equipment during the early stages of the operation and maintained these functions on the beaches throughout August.

From the outset of the campaign a shortage of transportation made signal operations difficult. Gaps existing between the echelons of command widened, rendering the usual modes of high speed construction of wire, Rapid Pole Line, and Multi-Air-Line so inadequate that they were not used. Instead, wire construction personnel of two battalions rehabilitated 1,716 miles of Postes, Telegraphes, and Telephones open wire lines and placed 152 miles of Spiral-4 on messenger. From the beaches north to Brignoles the lines were badly damaged, requiring almost complete rehabilitation; but northward from that point the open wire was in fair condition and breaks were mended quickly. Delay in arrival of signal units with special purpose vehicles for wire construction

handicapped development of wire communications during the early, fast-moving phase of the campaign.

The month of September brought the Seventh Army its severest communication difficulties, but limited Seventh Army signal personnel surmounted these problems and established several records in doing so. Great distances between echelons of the Seventh Army and its subordinate units made wire communication a tremendous problem until the end of September, when base section and army group personnel began to take over some of the many rear lines and the tactical advance began to slow down. The long distances involved in the first half of the month were ideal for radio, since the sky wave could be used almost exclusively to all commands. On 6 September the shortest radio circuit was 88 miles — to Army B; on 14 September, it was 43 miles — also to Army B; and on 20 September, just after the Command Post moved to Vesoul, it had narrowed down to 15 miles — to VI Corps. Even at Vesoul, however, the majority of radio circuits covered distances of more than 100 miles.

The speed of the advance and the growth of communications is forcibly portrayed by the Seventh Army Line Route Maps, Communications, Traffic, Circuit and Radio Diagrams for D-Day to 1 October when the Command Post was established at Epinal and the situation became semi-stabilized.

Highway Repairs

Concurrently with the strenuous program of bridge reconstructions to reopen rail lines, maintenance of other means of transportation was essential. Roads in southern France form a dense and comprehensive network, generally well constructed, but weakened by bridges, some of which were limited by civilian authorities to loads of five tons or less. From tactical and supply standpoints, the most important of the highways were the Route Napoleon, Highway 85, extending from the beaches to Caste Dane, Digne, Sisteron, Gap, and Grenoble and Highway 7 which followed the left bank of the Rhone, passing through Montelimar, Valence, and Lyon. Although the enemy's rapid

withdrawal denied him the opportunity for demolitions as extensive as could be accomplished in a slower retreat, conversely the problem of highway maintenance by the Engineer Corps increased with mileages involved.

Corps and divisional engineers accomplished repairs to highways and bridges, although there was little new road construction. Engineer units were largely concerned with mine sweeping, removal of roadblocks, clearing of debris, and filling of bomb, shell, and demolition holes.

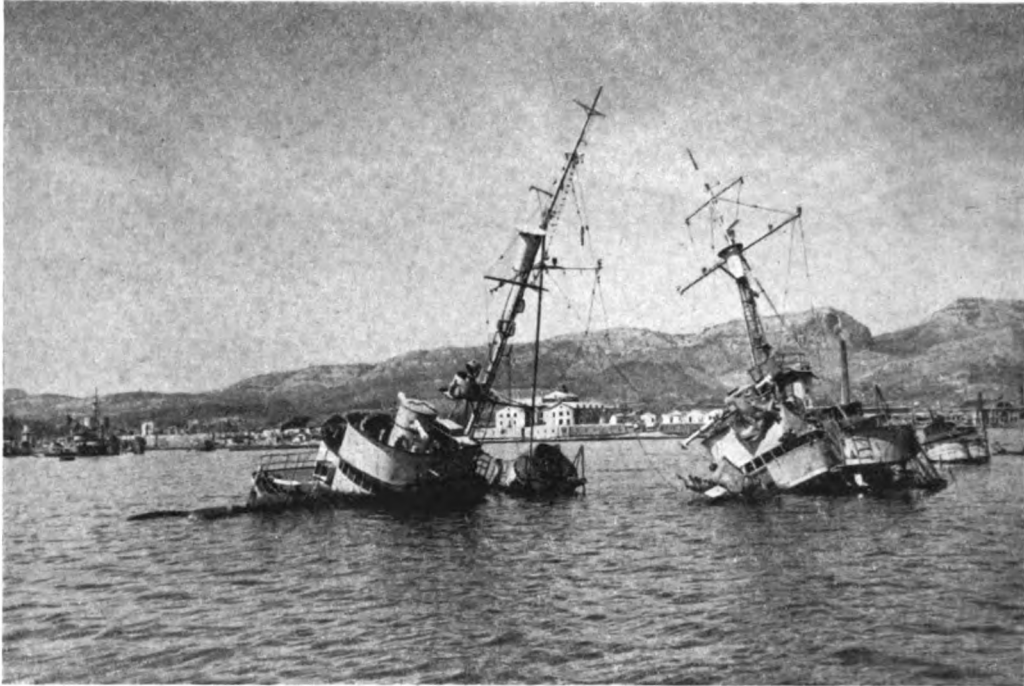
Prior to the end of September, however, the Army engineers had constructed 88 highway bridges, of which 19 were considered major work projects, in addition to the erection of 28 Bailey bridges. Construction of timber bridges to replace Bailey bridges was expedited because of the shortage of tactical bridging material.

Ports and Bases

Steps to shift from beach to port operations followed the fall of Toulon and Marseille on 28 August, 27 days ahead of the planning time-table used by Army engineers. It had been contemplated that Toulon would be the first sizeable port to fall to Allied control, but the sweep of the French made both ports available at approximately the same time. A choice of ports to rehabilitate was presented.

Marseille, largest port of France and of the Mediterranean, was the southern terminus of the Rhone-Saone corridor, with rail connections inland through Grenoble and Lyon, and canal connections with the Rhone. Its artificial harbor was secure in all weather; and its facilities, with 85,000 feet of quays and 98 projecting wharves largely served by rail, could in peacetime handle 20,000 deadweight long tons daily. Toulon, 31 miles southeast, had a peacetime capacity of less than that of Marseille; and preliminary reconnaissance disclosed that, contrary to expectations, it had been damaged more severely than Marseille. German demolition units had destroyed the naval base and other installations, while shore bombardment by Allied naval vessels and bombing by the Air Corps had increased the magnitude of destruction. It was

estimated that upon development Toulon would have a capacity of but ten berths for Liberty ships; Marseille, strategically better located, could be developed to berth eight Liberties by 8 September and ten by 25 September along with accommodations for a total of 25 other ships.



SCUTTLED SHIPS IN TOULON HARBOR

"...It was estimated that upon development, Toulon would have a capacity of but ten berths ..."

Three days after the fall of the two ports, the Chief of Staff conferred with Engineer officers, Naval officers, and Coastal Base Section officers on reconstruction of the facilities. Decision was made to concentrate all salvage personnel and equipment available on repair of the port of Marseille under supervision of Army engineers, while Seabees would develop Toulon harbor under a plan of operation to be furnished by the Continental Base Section. On the same day the Naval Commander of the Western Naval Task Force stated in a dispatch to General Patch that "Experience in this theatre has shown that beach

maintenance after mid-September is inadequate and that it is essential to have protected ports available to insure adequate facilities to supply advancing armies", and outlined his plan to accomplish that goal.

Joint operations of Army and Naval forces immediately began



BLASTING A PASSAGE-WAY THROUGH TO MARSEILLES HARBOR

"... The northern end of the port was completely blocked by sunken ships ..."

rehabilitation of the great port which had been damaged extensively. The northern end of the port was completely blocked by sunken ships, while anchorage in the southern end was suitable for restoration as a lighter landing. The inner harbor was sown with magnetic and acoustic mines and all types of explosives were buried in the port area. Jetties, quays, berth spaces, and cranes were mined and booby-trapped after blasting had wrecked them. Thousands of mines lay in the channel beyond the outer mole, undetonated by the enemy for lack of time.

Representatives of base section coordinated with Army in rehabilitation of the port, as had been the procedure since the early

stages after the landing to facilitate the transfer of line of communication functions to base. The original plan was for base section to assume control of the first major port ten days after its fall from the Seventh Army. Three days after the fall of the ports, responsibilities were



HARBOR OF MARSEILLE

"... jetties, quays, berth spaces, and cranes were mined and booby trapped after blasting had wrecked them . . ."

divided with the engineer base section assuming the duties of engineer work in Marseille and Toulon except for port repair, which was a function of the Seventh Army Engineer. Eight engineer units available for port work were divided. The Army Engineer representative prepared to direct unloading of the three port repair shiploads of personnel and materiel, which had been loaded out to land on call after D plus 10, and subsequent rehabilitation of the port.

Construction was immediately started on the "hards" for landing LCTs and ramps for landing lighters and DUKWs. Unloading

by lighters proceeded in the southern end of the port while clearing of the inner port was in progress. The task of clearing Marseille harbor was assigned to the 1051st Port Construction and Repair Group, which had performed the same mission at Naples. The 36th Engineer Combat Regiment had the job of "delousing" the inner harbor and reconstruction of the berths to be ready by the time the Navy cleared a passage through the blockships. That part of the Marseille area known as Avant Port Joliette was declared by the Navy to be clear of mines as of 1800 hours, 3 September; and port ships began to discharge there.

Bassins, Marechal, Petain, and Mirabeau were opened 15 September, at which time two and one-half Liberty berths alongside Mole H, and nine holding berths in Avant Port Sud were already available. Bassins, President Wilson, and de Pinede were to be cleared by 18 September, on which day Liberty ships were unloading at ten dock berths and operations were three days ahead of the original Navy estimates. Five days later Admiral Hewitt radioed General Patch that on or about 25 September the port of Marseille would have a discharge capacity of 12,500 tons daily.

By 25 September when Camel Beach was closed, the Navy reported that there were 16 alongside and 23 offshore berths in use at Marseille, three at Port de Bouc, and seven and one-half at Toulon. There had been unloaded at Marseille 50,569 personnel, 6,711 vehicles, 99,171 tons of dry cargo, and 10,000 barrels. At Toulon aggregate discharges to 25 September were 5,085 personnel, 2,628 vehicles, 24,252 tons of dry cargo, and 76,130 barrels. Through Port de Bouc there had been discharged 30,795 tons of dry cargo and 239,600 barrels. The Navy reported that on D plus 40 there had been brought ashore over beach and through ports 324,069 personnel, 68,419 vehicles, 490,237 tons of dry cargo, and 325,730 barrels of wet cargo in support of DRAGOON.

On 8 September transfer of control from Army to Base Section of line of communication functions was arranged, relieving all engineer regiments of Army except one battalion from each of the 36th and 40th Engineer Combat Regiments as soon as the three ships of the port repair convoy had been unloaded. Headquarters of Coastal Base Section had opened 1 September in Marseille with limited functions, and Base

Section Engineers assumed responsibility for normal engineer duties in the base zone on 10 September. The transfer of Army responsibility to the Base Section was completed by D plus 26. Near Shore Control Headquarters at Naples terminated its activities, and the ports operated directly with SOS NATOUSA and other lines of communication agencies. By the end of the month the Continental Base Section opened at Dijon, and Delta Base Section replaced it at Marseille.

Summary of the Period

As the period of rapid advance came to a close, at the end of September, combat troops were faced with new conditions. Continuous pursuit over long distances changed to difficult and plodding progress, and the weather became cold and rainy. The old stone houses, the mountains, the rain reminded many a veteran of the previous winter in Italy. The "champagne" war was over. Troops of the services of supply had given full support to the advance, working under difficult conditions brought about by plans which lagged far behind operations.

1945 On 27 September General Truscott issued a memorandum to all officers and men of the VI Corps, summarizing the accomplishments of Operation DRAGOON:

Seven weeks ago the VI Corps landed on the beaches in Southern France. In these seven weeks, ably supported by Naval and Air Forces and by our French Allies and French Forces of the Interior, you have cleared the enemy beach defenses, you have encircled and isolated the ports of Toulon and Marseille, and facilitated their capture by our French Allies. You have cleared the Durance Valley, encircling and destroying a large portion of the German Nineteenth Army; you have opened the Rhone River Valley. You have pursued the fleeing remnants of the once proud German Army almost to the border of Germany itself. Your pursuit has covered almost 500 miles from the beaches. It has involved hard fighting against a desperate enemy. It has involved two major river crossings. You have encountered and overcome every obstacle that German ingenuity could devise. You have been required, with less than organic transportation, to move yourself and your weapons over hundreds of miles, distances that few would have considered possible.

Your operations have been of great assistance to the Allied Armies

in Northern France and a vital factor in clearing Southwestern, Southern, and Eastern France of enemy forces.

This campaign will stand as a monument to the training, fighting spirit, boldness, aggressiveness, determination and willingness to undergo hardship, of the American soldier and the leadership of American officers of all ranks. To all officers and men I express my sincere appreciation for your hard and untiring efforts and my deep admiration for your accomplishments during this period.

Our task is not yet done. Hard fighting remains. The enemy, reorganized and reinforced, is on the border of his own country. Difficult and rugged terrain confronts us. Rain, cold, and snow will increase the difficulty of our operation. However, I face the future with complete confidence that, surmounting every obstacle and taking every objective in your accustomed manner, you will destroy the enemy before you, and will be a vital factor in the final defeat of the enemies of our country.

EAD

